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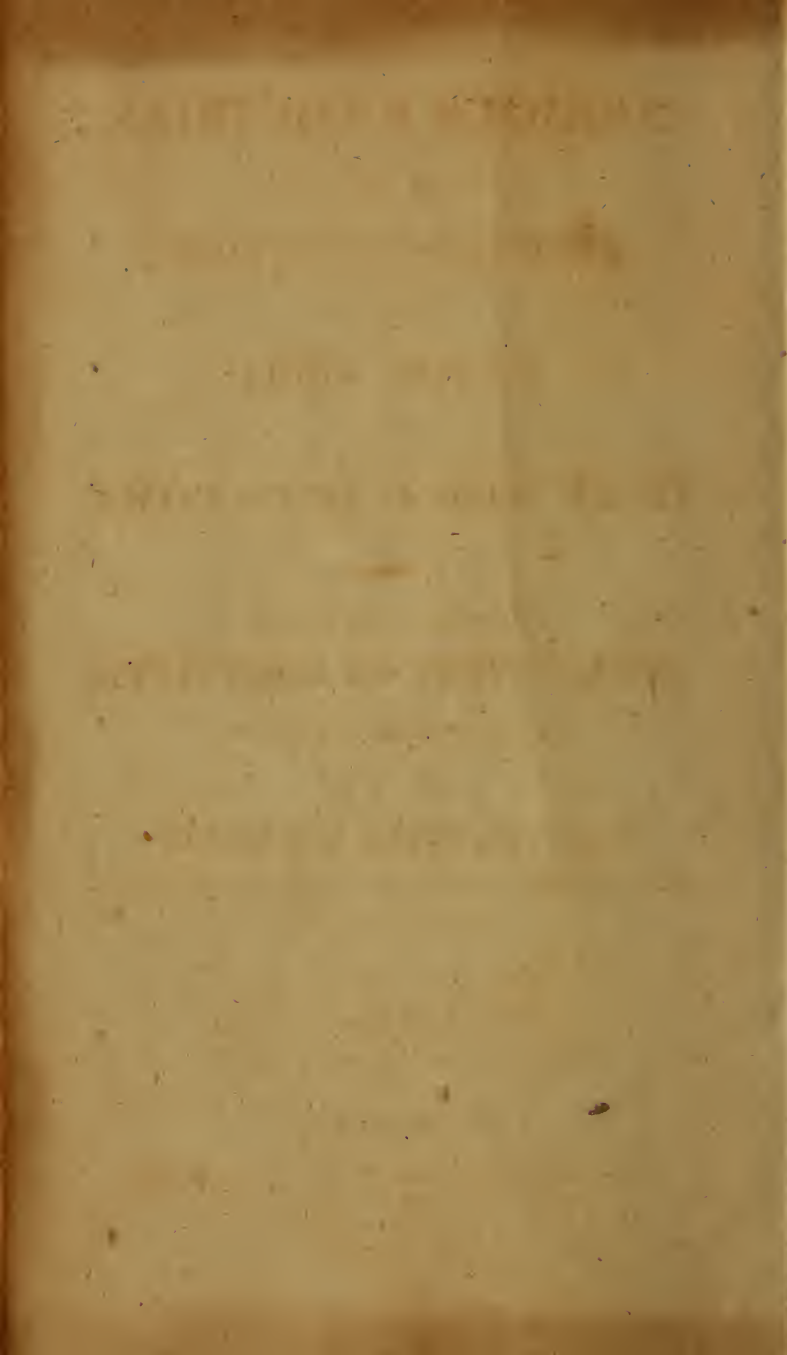
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SERIOUS ENQUIRIES,
OR,
IMPORTANT QUESTIONS
RELATIVE
TO THIS WORLD
AND
THAT WHICH IS TO COME.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
REFLECTIONS ON MORTALITY,
OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH

OF THE
REV. THOMAS SPENCER,
Who was drowned whilst bathing at Liverpool,
AUGUST 5, 1811.

BY CHARLES BUCK.

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TO THE READER.

DEAR READER,

Permit a well-wisher to your present and future happiness, to call your attention to a subject of the greatest importance. You possess an immortal soul; and whatever be your age, circumstances, or prospects, you must shortly exchange this world for another. You may now be favoured with health of body, and cheerfulness of mind; you may be surrounded with every thing pleasant here, and be looking forward to long life; but remember, you must die, and, after death, you must appear before the solemn tribunal of the Judge of the whole earth. It is of infinite consequence, therefore, that you seek his favour, that you may be found of him in peace. I have written

the following little Work with a view to excite enquiry as to this great object. It is by no means designed to make you dissatisfied with human life; but that you may estimate it in a proper manner, and feel the importance of being prepared for a better state. That the perusal of it may be the mean of promoting these ends, is the earnest prayer of the Author,

C. B.

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SERIOUS ENQUIRIES.

MAN is distinguished in the scale of existence as a rational creature ; hence, a desire of knowledge is natural to him. He possesses a principle of curiosity which influences him to make perpetual enquiries, as to the nature and tendency of the various objects which pass in succession before him. It is to be lamented, however, that while he is anxious to ascertain the causes and effects of sublunary events, he is too unmindful of his best interest. Fascinated by the appearance of worldly scenes, and hurried on by the force of sensual appetites, he forgets that he is an accountable, an immortal being ; and will not stop to consider things as they really are. Though reason and conscience, providence and revelation, are monitors which remind him of his duty ; yet he will not listen to their dictates, but too often prefers the present gratification of his senses, to his future welfare and happiness.

Now, reader, if this has been your case ; if you have been thus deceived ; and lived hith-

erto without consideration—for a few moments attend to the voice of Instruction. Come, and let us ask a few important questions in relation to our present and future state: and may it, under the Divine blessing, excite us to seek wisdom from above, and to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear. Our first enquiry then shall be as to

HUMAN LIFE.

WHAT is it? Is it stationary? Is it substantial? Is it of long duration? Is it at our command, and at our controul? Can we live as long as we please? Can we even say, tomorrow is our's; or can we tell what a day will bring forth? Alas! no. Ask then, *what is it?* Is it not “a vapour, that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away?”* And what strength is there in a vapour? who can grasp a vapour? How weak, how uncertain, how fleeting is it! Who would ever think of trusting to that which so soon expires? Who would ever think of building his happiness on that which is precarious, and must soon pass away? Again, *what is it?* Is it not

* James iv. 14.

like the withering grass and the fading flower? Hear the Scripture: "As for man, his days are as grass; as the flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more."* And who would place all his dependence on such frail objects as these? Who would gaze perpetually on the most beautiful flower that must shortly fade? Again, *what is it?* Is it not a dream?† How confused, how vain, how empty! Look back on your past life, and ask whether it does not appear to you as a dream? How transient has it been! And how trifling and unimportant the scenes in which you have been engaged! *What is it?* Is it not like the swift sailing vessel?‡ Besides its rapid motion, consider too how often it is exposed to danger; how frequently visited with the storm; how little at the command of mortals when the winds and the waves beat upon it! And should you like always to be tossed with tempest? Is it pleasant to be always in danger? Or, is the troubled sea your delight? Again, *what is it?* Is it not as a tale that is told?§ Yes, reader; human

* Ps. ciii. 15.

† Job xx. 8.

‡ Job ix. 26.

§ Ps. xc. 9.

life has been a sorrowful tale to many. Sin has embittered it with a thousand evils. It has been a mournful story, and the end has been worse than the beginning. It is a tale, too, that is soon told; "for man that is born of a woman is but of few days, and full of trouble."* And have you ever thought what will be told of you? Shall it be said that you lived and died without repentance? Dreadful thought! if this be all that your survivors shall be able to inscribe on your tomb. O that you may be wise, and seek the favour of him, whose grace alone can render life pleasant and death welcome. Again, *what is it?* Is it a large portion of time? Are centuries allotted for man's existence? No: "The days of our years are three score years and ten, and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away."† Nay, it is compared to a week, a day, a span, a sleep, a hand-breadth, a watch in the night. We need not then to waste the few moments we have. We need not laboriously exert ourselves in trying to abridge human life. Is it too long for us, that we can idle so much of

* Job xiv. 1.

† Ps. xc. 10.

it away? Is it so dull, that we can willingly give up great part of it to unnecessary sleep; to vain conversation, to unlawful pleasures? Reader, remember how contracted it is already; and what a solemn command is given to “redeem the time:”* for *what is it?* It is a valuable treasure to be redeemed. What is gone indeed cannot be recalled, but what is to come may be improved. Who can tell what depends on a single moment! “By the enjoyment of God, every moment may be rendered more valuable than the whole earth.” But if it be mispent; if it be devoted to the service of sin and satan; if it be lavished on the vanities of time and sense; if by wicked devices it be murdered in this world, it will rise up against us in the next? O the folly of endeavouring to lose that which is so precious; of killing that which is of such importance! O dear-bought pleasures, if they rob me of my time; ill-purchased enjoyments, if my moments are passing away to testify my neglect, my indolence, my guilt, at the bar of God! “What will it profit me, if I gain the whole world and lose my own soul?”†

Once more, let me put the question as to

* Chap. v. 16.

† Mark viii. 36.

human life : *what is it ?* Does it creep slowly on ; can nothing stay its course ; can none command the sun to stand still, nor stop the march of time ? Alas ! no : it is but one life, and that is running out with unimpeded rapidity. “ My days,” said Job, “ are swifter than a post ; they flee away ; they see no good ; they pass away as the eagle that hasteth to the prey. They are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and are spent without hope. O remember that my life is wind, as the cloud is consumed, and vanisheth away.”* “ The sun returns every day, but time never returns.” O how very soon do the moments complete the minutes ; the minutes the hour ; the hours the day ; the days the month ; the months the year ; and the years the life ! Come then reader, on the review of these answers, to this important question ; kneel down before him who has thy life in his hand, and say, “ Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am. Behold thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth, and mine age as nothing before thee. Teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom.”†

* Job ix. 26. Job vii. 6, 7. 9.

† Psalm xxxix. 4, 5, and xc. 12.

Having now answered the question as to *human life*, let us make some enquiries as to

HUMAN NATURE.

AND *what is human nature?* Is it pure, dignified, and naturally virtuous, as some suppose? Alas! no. “Lo, this have I found, that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.”* Man was created after the image of God; a holy, happy, intelligent being. He had not only a literal paradise around him, but a moral paradise within him. His mind was illumined by the light of heaven. His will was conformed to the divine law, and his affections placed on the supreme good. This was his original righteousness; but which after all, as experience has proved, was mutable; for how soon was this illustrious sun eclipsed, his glory sullied, and his excellency cast down to the ground! Sin entered into the world; degraded his powers, filled him with shame, tormented him with guilt, deprived him of his happiness, and exposed him to death! Hence, what an awful scene soon appeared. “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in

* Eccl. vii. 29.

the earth; and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* Adam, driven from paradise, carried his fallen, corrupt nature with him; hence, all his offspring became contaminated, and the world was filled with iniquity as fast as its population increased. Nor has his depravity been diminished by the succession of ages: man remains the same now as ever; and none can say, “I have made my heart clean; I am pure from my sin.”† Some indeed are inclined to think more highly of human nature; and that it is not the innate depravity, but the evil examples of others, by which we are injured. But let us only attend to scripture, observation, and experience, and we shall find that man has nothing to glory in. “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. We are by nature the children of wrath. For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evils come

* Gen. vi. 5.

† Prov. xx. 9.

from within, and defile the man. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."* Let these scriptures suffice to prove this humiliating doctrine. Observation will furnish us with many awful evidences of man's lost condition. From whence do all the calamities in the world arise, but from this corrupt fountain? From whence all our sighs, our tears, our afflictions, our pains, our losses, our disappointments, our miseries—but from this? How early in life too does this depravity begin to operate? What aversion from good, and what a propensity to evil, do we observe in the rising generation? "Foolishness is said to be bound in the heart of a child."† What do we see in the conduct of those of a larger growth? Do men naturally love God? do they seek his favour? do they abhor iniquity, and reverence the Divine name? Alas! on the contrary, do they not live in a state of rebellion against him, and work iniquity with all greediness? Do they not also rise up one against another? Are not envy, jealousy, malignity, constantly at work? Whence come wars and fightings among men, and the whole world

* Job xiv. 4. Ps. li. 5. John iii. 6. Eph. ii. 3.

Mark vii. 21, 22. Jer. xvii. 2.

† Prov. xxii. 15.

convulsed by their animosities and broils? What are judges and counsellors, preachers and magistrates, but as so many witnesses to these facts? Every lock on our doors, every bar on our gates, every seal on our deeds, every security we give or require, all prove the same! Let us ask too our own experience. How do our imaginations rove: what a proneness to do what is forbidden! How uneasy are we under restraints. How ready to listen to temptation. What a false colouring do we put upon objects. How sensual in our inclinations. How forward to complain, if we cannot gratify our appetites. How much easier led by bad, than by good examples. How ready to apologise for our sins, or how desirous to extenuate them, or cast the blame on others! What does all this show, but that we are corrupt. Let us not then attempt to hide ourselves from ourselves. Let us confess our transgressions to him who alone can forgive them, and be deeply humbled under the consideration of our fallen state. Let us learn from hence also, how necessary it is that this nature be changed; "for except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* Let us weep over our condition as

* John iii. 3.

sinful creatures, and look for pardon and peace through the merits of him who came into the world to save sinners. "His blood cleanseth from all sin."* His grace can conquer all the rebellious passions of our nature, and render us happy in this world and that which is to come. But,

Let us now pass on to make some enquiries as to those things which are considered as forming the highest enjoyments of human life.

WEALTH.

HOW much is wealth thought of and desired by the generality of mankind: but *what is it?* Can it ensure happiness? can it keep off pain? can it remove anxiety? Are the richest always the happiest? have they no thorn in their pillow? are they strangers to solicitude? have they no wants? How often do anxiety and care, ambition and envy, arise in proportion to the abundance of wealth men possess? What a snare has it often proved. How many on their dying beds may truly say, "This wealth has

* 1 John i. 7.

killed me : had I possessed less, I should not have fallen a victim to intemperance. I should not have been so exposed to the world : but here, alas ! I am, ruined and undone, by the very blessings which should have rendered me more thankful to God, and useful to my fellow creatures."

Our Saviour informs us, that " man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth."* And the Psalmist says, " men of high degree are a lie."† We deceive ourselves, if we imagine that wealth constitutes felicity. External glare cannot produce, nor be a substitute for, internal quietude. The mind may amuse itself, by casting up the numbers ; and there may be, doubtless, a pleasure in observing the sum total : but it is seldom such a pleasure that makes a man sit down and say, " I am contented ; I want no more ; I am truly happy." Hence Solomon observes, " he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase : this is also vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them ; and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes."‡

* Luke xii. 15.

† Ps. lxii. 9.

‡ Eccl. v. 10, 11.

And what after all indeed is it? “ Riches profit not in the day of wrath.”* Death cannot be bribed; and it is certain, it cannot be rendered less terrific by wealth. A crown of gold on a dying man’s head cannot alleviate his pain, nor remove his fears. Nay, the greater his possessions, the more unwilling is he to leave the world. Such a place too have they occupied in his affections; such influence have they gained over his heart, that he has, perhaps, neglected the true riches. Though surrounded with every thing splendid here, he has been *morally poor*; his wealth has engendered pride, conceit, oppression, and infidelity; so that as he has been carried to his grave, survivors have had too much reason to exclaim, “ Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.”†

It is true this cannot apply to all. Many on whom the Divine Being hath bountifully bestowed the blessings of his providence, have also been rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom. They have disposed of their wealth in works of necessity and charity; they have been a blessing to their poor neighbours, the church,

* Prov. xi. 4.

† Psa. lii. 7.

and the country at large. Thus it has been consecrated to good purposes. But how small the number of these compared with the generality ; and what a vehicle has wealth been for every kind of wickedness : and let us remember, that when not sanctified, it is a curse rather than a blessing. It is rather a chain to bind us to the world, than wings to fly above it. Even good men have found it a temptation ; and some, like Agur, have prayed for mediocrity, “lest they should be full, and say, Who is the Lord ?”*

Well then, reader, “Will you set your eyes on that which is not ?”† For there is nothing secure, nothing satisfying, nothing abiding in earthly riches. “The world indeed is God’s great house, richly furnished, and we have all things liberally afforded us *for our use* ; but they are not ours. God has therefore set death at the gate, to see that as we brought nothing into this world, so we shall carry nothing out.”‡ However necessary to supply our wants by the way, they must leave us at the end. Set not your affections then on sordid dust ; you have capacities for the enjoyment of higher and nobler objects than earth

* Prov. xxx. 7. 9.

† Prov. xxvi. 3.

‡ Hopkins.

can afford. "Lay up for yourself treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt; and where thieves do not break through nor steal."* Ever remember the declaration of the Apostle, "They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."†

FAME.

HOW much is popular applause sought after by many: but *what is it?* Is it that which can ward off the ills of life? can it defend us from the arrows of adversity? can it save us from slander and reproach? can it assure us that we shall be exempt from pain; sickness and death? Alas! no. Reputation, or a good name, is indeed desirable by every one. Character is of the highest importance in society;

* Matt. vi. 17, 18.

† 1 Tim. vi. 10.

and to excel in every good work is what we should all aim at. But popularity: *what is it?* It does not always arise from real excellence. It is not always the child of virtue. It does not always attend the wise and the good.* The best of characters have sometimes been treated as the worst; and the worst have been held up to public view as the best. So vitiated is the taste of mortals, that the fame of some men has been derived from the ignorance they have displayed; the bigotry they have manifested; the blood they have spilt; the towns and cities they have depopulated; and the multitudes they have destroyed. That there is a popularity highly deserved and very properly worn, by some useful men, cannot be denied; but it is well known that such are its attendants; such frequently its labours; so numerous its cares, so great its dangers, that many have been almost glad to retire back again into the shade, and pass away the rest

* Herod was popular, but for what? for putting James to death: for when he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further, to take Peter also. And Felix, though he knew Paul was innocent, yet in order to be popular with the Jews, left him in bonds. Inquisitors and persecutors have been popular at the expence of the blood of the saints, and the excellent of the earth!

of their days in obscurity. For how many strong men hath it wounded. How few have been able to bear it with propriety. From this eminence how many have fallen down and been dashed to pieces. Look at Herod. The multitude said it was the voice of a god and not of a man; but this cost him his life. One confessed that for the sake of popularity he set fire to the famous temple of Diana at Ephesus; but this was his destruction. What is the language of many an individual but this, "O could I but rise; could I be but known; could I be but popular; could I but command the multitude; I should be happy, —I should want no more." But are you certain of that? Are you sure you could bear it? do you know it is a slippery place? have you seriously thought what manner of person you ought to be, when so many eyes are fixed upon you? O vain man, you know not what you ask. It is perhaps wisely withheld from you, because you of all others are least able to bear it.

Reader, be not anxious then for this supposed good. It is of more consequence what you are thought of in heaven than on earth. The approbation of your Maker, and an interest in his favour, outweighs all the empty

applause of mortals. Remember that he who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; he, whom all the angels in heaven worship—he was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief! Besides, what is there so uncertain, so precarious as popular applause! It is rendered so by the very weakness of our nature. A very small speck is discernible on a bright object. One single defect, one unguarded step, one rash word, one little circumstance may be magnified or misrepresented, so as to diminish respect, and cause our popularity to fade. And what so humbling, so distressing, as to be doomed not to obscurity only, but to contempt; not to sit on the lowest seat, but to stand at a distance, as if unworthy of regard, or even notice. But it is also precarious, if we consider the fickleness and inconstancy of human nature. One day they cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" the next, "Away with him, crucify him, crucify him!" How did the multitude exclaim, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands!" But how soon did they alter their tone, and pursued him from one place to another, so that his life was not safe in the land of Israel. Of Paul and Bar-

nabas they said, "the gods are come down to us in the likeness of men!" They called the one Jupiter, and the other Mercury; and it was with difficulty they were prevented from offering sacrifice to them. But soon after we read, "that there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people; and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead."*

As to the favour of men, then, how vain is it! Nor let it be supposed, that even the favour of princes and the great of the earth, can secure our happiness, for this also is subject to change. Nay, it is often the case, as one observes, "that in the courts of great princes, a man may be in favour one day, and the next lie under heavy displeasure; one while he may be graced with the chief honours of a kingdom, and soon after be utterly neglected, disgraced, and discarded."† Haman, that proud favourite, who ruled king Ahasuerus at his pleasure, was cast out of favour upon one complaint, and the king would not hear him plead for his life. He was hanged on that very day which he expected

* Acts xiv. 19.

† Mrs. Head.

would have been the day of his greatest honour. David had learned by his own experience the inconstancy and mutability of the favour of princes, and therefore says, "it is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes."*

The celebrated philosopher Seneca was tutor to Nero in his youth, and was in such credit with him after he became emperor, that for a time he managed all the affairs of his estate. Nero often showed him the greatest tokens of love possible; and yet afterwards afforded him no other favour, but the choice of what death he would suffer.

After Bellisarius, that famous general under Justinian the emperor, had been victorious in many battles, conquered many countries, and had led in triumph Gillemer, king of the Vandals in fetters of gold, for his own greater honour, he was cast out of favour, had his eyes put out; and being led up and down the city of Rome, was obliged to procure a scanty maintenance by soliciting the charity of those he met with.

Clitus, who was an intimate friend of Alexander the great, was put to death by Alexan-

* Psalm cxviii. 9.

der, only because he was a little too familiar with him.

Mahomet the second, that conquered Constantinople, had a most beautiful virgin named Irene, brought to him when he was sacking that city ; and he was so fond of her company, that he forsook his bashaws, and disregarded all the affairs of his empire. But he could not bear it to be said, that he who had conquered so much, was at length led captive by a woman. And therefore, when he understood that his bashaws were dissatisfied with his conduct, and was afraid of losing his reputation, he commanded Irene to attire herself in the richest and costliest apparel that could be devised. This being done, he took her by the hand, and led her into the room where all his bashaws were assembled by his command, and asked whether each of them would not, as well as he, forget every thing but her. They were so amazed to see such a wonderful beauty, that they condemned themselves for censuring the emperor, and justified him in what he had done. But Mahomet told them, that he would show them he was master of his passions ; and immediately struck off her head !

PLEASURE.

HOW much is thought of worldly pleasure : but *what is it ?* Is it rational ; suited to the capacities and worthy of the pursuit of such a being as man ? Is it obtained and enjoyed without any inconvenience and expence ? Does it tend to dignify and enlarge the mind ? Does it awaken in man those reflections and prepare him for those exertions which ought to characterise him as an immortal creature ? And when it is past, is the review of it such as produces satisfaction ; does it never leave a sting behind ? Alas ! let the worldling answer. What are called by too many the pleasures of life, are just the reverse. They are often mean in their nature, transitory in their enjoyment, and ruinous in their consequences. They take off the mind from the contemplation of superior objects ; render the heart insensible to what is good, and expose it to the most dangerous temptations. “ As Judas gave a sign to the officers that came with him to apprehend Jesus, whomsoever I shall kiss, the same is he ; hold him fast. The same sign doth the world give satan. Whomsoever

I shall caress and favour, whomsoever I shall heap honour and riches on, whomsoever I shall embrace and kiss, the same is he, hold him fast !”*

How much too does it cost some men ? What sacrifices does it require ? What large gifts must be presented at the shrine of pleasure ? A man cannot be permitted to worship this goddess without offerings of a most valuable nature. O how many have destroyed a fine constitution ; thrown themselves on the bed of sickness ; or dragged through life a miserable frame—and all for a short lived pleasure ! How many in one hour at the gaming-table have lost what would have been sufficient to have supported them for a long period ! What has not been suffered in order to witness exhibitions of a vain, and often profane tendency ! By listening to the voice of this charmer, how too has reputation been injured ; shame and remorse have followed, and the unhappy captive has scarcely been able to hold up his head in virtuous and decent society ! What time also is lost : the valuable hours, which should be devoted to reflection, to improvement, to works of utility and charity, are all swallowed

up by preparation for, and attendance on, these transient enjoyments; while the imagination is polluted, the animal frame exhausted, the immortal principle within degraded and forgotten; and society injured by examples of prodigality, sensuality, and impiety. And yet all this is called *enjoying life*; seeing the world, and driving away melancholy. But, reader, *what is it?* If this be the result, which is too often the case, is it worth your pursuing? will it repay you for your toil? will it increase your felicity on the whole? will it render you useful in life? will it make death pleasant? will it fit you for an eternal state? Alas! no.* Turn a deaf ear then to

* Hear the testimony of a noble lord in the view of death. "I have run," says he, "the silly rounds of business and of pleasure, and I have done with them all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and consequently know their futility, and do not regret their loss. I appraise them at their real value, which is in truth very low; whereas those who have not experienced, always over-rate them. They only see their gay outside, and are dazzled with their glare; but I have been behind the scenes; I have seen all the coarse pullics and dirty ropes which exhibit and move the gaudy machine, &c. When I reflect back upon what I have seen, what I have heard, and what I have done, I can hardly persuade myself that all that

the blandishments of the world. Be not deceived by her fair appearances. Depend not on her specious promises. The seeds of death are mixed in the feast she prepares; the baneful poison is secreted in the cup she gives. Her paradise is the paradise of fools; where, under the wide-spreading flower, the serpent is coiled, and which never fails to awake and sting the votary of sensual pleasure! O how many have found her golden sceptre to be after all a rod of iron. Could we but penetrate her dwelling—could we but accurately survey her abode, we should find, notwithstanding all her professions of liberty and happiness, that she has her cells, where multitudes are imprisoned; her dungeons, where the unhappy victims are loaded with the chains of guilt,

frivolous hurry, bustle, and pleasure of the world, had any reality; but I look upon all that has passed as one of those romantic dreams which opium commonly occasions; and I do by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose, for the sake of the fugitive dream. Shall I tell you that I bear this melancholy situation, with that meritorious constancy and resignation which most people boast of? No; for I really cannot help it. I bear it—because I must bear it, whether I will or no.—And I think of nothing but killing time, now that he has become mine enemy.

Lord Chesterfield.

poverty, and despair. Yea, more, we should behold a sad spectacle; we should find her burial-place strewed with the spoils of thousands whom she has deceived and destroyed!

But there are some who tells us, they are no advocates for public pleasures; and who think it childish to mix with the multitude in beholding public sights and exhibitions: but while they make such confessions as these, they are perhaps as much deceived another way. Though seldom led to seek for pleasures abroad, they live in the habit of intemperance at home. What shall I eat, what shall I drink? is their constant language. But, reader, are expensive viands, sumptuous fare, costly diet, the idols a rational, intellectual, immortal being should adore? Is running to an excess in indulging the taste, or gratifying the appetite, the way to promote health, order, morality, decency, and benevolence? Ah, cruel Intemperance! methinks I see thee with thy destructive scythe, walking among the sons of pleasure; and while Religion and Morality are here and there lifting up their voice, and snatching a solitary few from within thy reach, thou art mowing down thy thousands. O yes! on how many tombs may it be written, "Here are the last remains

of one unhappily killed by intemperance." You then, that think of nothing but providing for the body, to fulfil the lusts thereof, whose only felicity is to satiate your appetites, stop for a moment, and ask the question, *what is it that I am doing?* Am I not far worse than the beasts of the field, who always know what is sufficient? Am I not losing my reason? Where will this carry me? Will it not lay a foundation for disease? Will it not accelerate the approach of the last enemy, death? Yes, intemperate man, answer these questions; for this, if not repented of, will stupify thy powers, emaciate thy frame, harden thy conscience, dig thy grave, and debar thee from the enjoyment of "that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

But my reader may ask, What, then, is all pleasure forbidden? What! is life to be one continual scene of serious reflection? What! nothing but devotion? I answer, that, as to real enjoyment, a devotional frame is the sublimest, the noblest, the most exalted pleasure in life; and no man in the present state can be happier than he who is blessed with it. To such a man, all other pleasures, all other exercises, all other pursuits are as nothing.

“He treads the world beneath his feet,
 “And all the world calls good and great.”

Holding intercourse with the Father of lights ; his mind being enlarged with a view of heavenly and eternal objects ; believing all things to be under divine controul ; and hoping at last to be received to the mansions of light—he rejoices with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

As the best of men, however, cannot always preserve this heavenly frame ; as we live in a world where temporal things must be attended to ; as we are touched and moved by surrounding objects—it cannot be expected that our joys will always be the same. Inferior pleasures, however, may be found, and let no man complain that Providence has been unkind ; has strewed his path with thorns, and embittered every thing to him. Is there no pleasure to be found in conversation ; in reading, in exercise ; in viewing the works of nature and art ; in friendship ; in gaining information, in imparting it ; in sympathy, in charity ; in the moderate use of the blessings of Providence ; in the use of our faculties ; in the variety of scene ; in rest after labour ; in society ; in vocal and instrumental harmony ;

in performing kind offices to our fellow-creatures; in study; in business; in the family; in meeting absent relatives; in daily preservation of our senses, our mercies, our lives? Now in all these, as well as in many others not mentioned, is there no enjoyment? Certainly there is. Man is not necessitated therefore to seek illicit pleasures—pleasures which fascinate the senses, excite cupidity, waste time, violate decency, destroy property, injure health, lead to poverty, and often to ruin. These are the pleasures which we would proscribe, however patronized, however general, however defended. All are delusory and vain. It is no matter by what name they are called: how dexterously concealed; how public and splendid they appear; nor what approbation they receive from the multitude—one broad sentence appears written on them all: “to be carnally minded is death.”* Listen, reader, then, to that voice which says, “that the friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world,

* Romans viii. 6.

the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.* Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”†

POWER.

AND *what is power?* Is it that which can secure our lives, or even render them less subject to care? Are those who move in the most elevated circles, and to whom the world look up with a kind of awe, the most happy among mankind? do not the bitter streams of human adversity find their way into the palace, as well as into the cottage? Nay, while the peasant from the very nature of his situation, has but

* 1 John ii. 15, 16, 17.

† 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

little comparatively to disturb his mind; the prince is involved in multitudinous cares, which his dignity can neither remove nor his power prevent. Besides too, how exposed are even the greatest to innumerable vicissitudes, by which authority may be lost, or power and influence reduced? But surely, say some, it must be a great thing to wear a crown, to sway a sceptre, to have multitudes at command, and to do what we please! Yes, and so it must, if happiness consisted in royalty. But kings are mortals like ourselves; they are composed of the same material, they breathe the same air, they inhabit the same disordered world, they possess the same nature, and feel the same wants as others. The royal blood that flows in their veins does not exempt them from the ills of life, and the woes attendant on fallen humanity; nor have they any exclusive grant from the Sovereign of the world to uninterrupted felicity. On the contrary, their crown is often a crown of thorns instead of glory; their garments have been rolled in blood; and their path beset with difficulties unknown to others. Indeed, what is more affecting than the history of human greatness! The annals of regal authority present us with some frightful pictures of human nature. What dreadful

battles have been fought, what ravages have been committed, what blood has been shed, to obtain a crown ! Over what fields of the slain, what heaps of dying mortals, have some stepped to the throne ! And when there, how has it tottered under them ; and the storms of national adversity rendered all precarious and insecure. “ Their greatness makes them too the fairer marks for envy to shoot at, and inflames many to use all their art and power to undermine them, that they may raise their own reputation and preferment upon their ruins. Kings therefore are apt to be afraid of all, and upon small occasions to hate even those whom they have chosen to guard them. And in this respect, as Seneca says, kings are in a worse condition than servants ; for these fear one, but they all.”* David was a good king, as well as great ; but how accumulated were his troubles ; how numerous his enemies ; and now many of these would he have escaped, had he remained the humble shepherd ! How many of the kings of Israel were slain by their own subjects ! Julius Cæsar, who was the emperor of the Roman monarchy, was murdered in the senate house by those who had formerly been his friends. The excellent character of

* Mrs. Head.

the emperor Justinian did not prevent his own subjects from murdering him. The emperor Henry IV. it is said, was deposed from his crown, in his old age, and reduced to such poverty, as to beg a poor prebend in the church of Asia. Bajazet, the proud emperor of the Turks, confessed to Tamerlane the Tartar, that, if he had taken him, he would have carried him about in a cage for all men to gaze at. But Tamerlane having obtained the victory, gave him the punishment which he intended for Tamerlane, for he caused him to be carried about in a cage of gold, and to be fed with the crumbs that fell from his table. Sapor, king of Persia, having taken Valerianus emperor of Rome, made use of him as a footstool to get upon his horse. How justly then did Solon tell Cræsus, that rich king of Lydia, that no one (not even kings) could be accounted happy until death. These are only a few instances out of many which might have been quoted. Now what is said of the vanity of the most dignified authority, may be said of all other. The warrior may have risen to power by his heroism and valour; the philosopher, by his genius; the statesman, by his profound ability; the philanthropist, by his benevolence; the counsellor by his oratory, or the divine by his

talents—but let none envy them ; if they move in a higher sphere, they find difficulties which others do not, and dangers from which those are exempt who move along in the obscure valley. To whom much is given, much also is required : and there must be much more exertion and labour in using ten talents than one. Learn then, reader, that happiness does not depend on power and influence. Ambition may strive to climb this eminence ; but the success scarcely repays the labour of obtaining it. And when we have arrived safe at the summit, we shall not find it all luxuriant and pleasant ; some barren spots will still be discerned, and we may look down and see others beneath quite as happy as we. It is wisdom then not to set our affections on this “ idol of the world ;” but to be content with the situations Providence has allotted us. There is a power indeed we do well to covet ; and that is a power over ourselves. Many, whose authority have been great and extensive, have been awfully deficient here. Alexander conquered the world, but not himself. To subdue ourselves ; to overcome our own passions ; to be willing to take up the cross daily ; to be submissive to divine Providence ;—this, this is the noblest work of man.

Reader, if, under the divine blessing, you should gain the victory over yourself, it will be a conquest far more important to you than if whole nations lay at your feet. Seek then this moral, this internal triumph. Hard indeed it may appear to obtain; but there is a power which can enable us to acquire it: on this power we must depend, or all our exertion will be in vain. "The Almighty knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust."* He has promised his grace to them that ask him. Seeing then the way is open, that he has even invited us to come, let us, in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, "go boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."†

BEAUTY.

BEAUTY, *what is it?* Will not the fairest form decay; will not the most blooming countenance fade; will not the most elegant figure be crumbled to dust? Contracted in-

* Psalm ciii. 14.

† Heb. iv. 16.

deed must be their happiness, whose affection centers alone in the creature. This is a snare in which some are entangled, to their destruction. Beauty, too often perverts the judgment, inflames the passions, and captivates the will. Nor are they the most happy who are the subjects of these attractions. Pride and vanity are frequently its attendants, and we know that pride and vanity are no friends to peace and tranquillity. Wherever these dwell they bring uneasiness, jealousy, envy, and torment with them. How soon too may beauty be sullied? He who created the dignified form, and so constructed the features, as to render the countenance fair and lovely, can as easily change it into an object of disgust; that what was before idolized, shall be avoided as offensive and unpleasant. After all then, *what is it?* Is it a real good, is it a permanent good? shall we adore that which is transient and perishing? Rather let us recollect ourselves; let us listen to the dictates of truth, than be imposed on by our imaginations. Let us hear what the voice of Revelation says, "When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth, surely every man is vanity. Thou pre-

vailest for ever against him, and he passeth: thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not.”* But even while it continues, *what is it?* especially without prudence? Solomon says, “As a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout, so is a fair woman without discretion.”† Yea, he declares without any limitation, “that favour is deceitful and beauty vain.”‡ Why then should we value it at so high a rate, when God accounts it of no worth? Samuel looked upon Eliab and said, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is before him.” But the Lord said to Samuel, “Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh upon the heart.”§ Let us hear the opinion of the ancients. Chrysostom said, that those who are not beautiful, are freed from many impediments. Tertullian said, beauty is to be feared, on account of the in-

* Psalm xxxix. 11. Job xiv. 2—20.

† Prov. xi. 22.

‡ Ibid. xxxi. 30.

§ 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

jury it does to the beholders. Socrates said, that the kingdom of beauty is violent for the time, but of short continuance; and Petrarch has left this sentence on record, "That beauty has made many adulterers, but has never made any chaste." Let not the possessors of it then be vain. It may prove to them the greatest of all curses. It has occasioned the misery of thousands. Parents who have idolized their children, on the account of it, have had reason at last to weep over the evils it has produced! Let the vain remember what a world it is in which they live; that the most beautiful flower is in an unfriendly soil; that it cannot be secured from the wintry blasts of adversity. Vicissitudes attend us on every side, and a very trifling circumstance may impair the finest form. A short fit of sickness; the reproach of an enemy; the unfaithfulness of a professed friend; the death of a dear relative, may so affect the spirits as to produce an evident alteration in the animal frame. Observe the case of Naomi; the death of her husband and sons had such an effect on her, that they scarcely knew her. Is this Naomi? said the whole city of Bethlehem, when they saw her. And she said, "Call me not Naomi; *i. e.* beautiful,

call me Mara, *bitter*, for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.”*

Let those who are destitute of it, not repine. It is not a qualification for happiness, for society, for usefulness. You may be intelligent; you may be prosperous; you may be contented; you may be serious; you may be useful without it. But my reader, let me remind you, that there is an object worthy of your pursuit; and that is, *moral beauty*; the beauty of the mind. This consists in a perception of what is right; an inclination to practise it, an aversion to every thing opposite to it. What this is, Revelation informs you, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.”† To revere him; believe in his Son; submit to his providence; to be influenced by his grace; to depend on his promise, and to aim at his glory; this constitutes the true dignity of mind, and beauty of character. This will afford happiness, when all other things will fade. Many outlive the beauty for which they once were so distinguished. The flower remains, but the colour is gone. But internal beauty, mental excellence, still

* Ruth i. 19, 20.

† Matt. xxii. 37.

increases in those who are devoted to the best Object. As they approach the grave, the world recedes ; hope brightens ; faith realises ; the dawn of the celestial world opens upon their view, till at last the shackles of mortality drop ; and they find themselves surrounded with light and glory, in that paradise where the perfection of beauty for ever dwells !

APPAREL.

HOW much is thought of decorating the body ! Alas ! to what expence do some go, in order to purchase costly apparel, that they may appear superior to others ; as if excellency consisted in exterior habiliments. But, *what is it ?* Can a fine garment create intellect, enlarge the mind, alleviate pain, soothe sorrow ? Can beautiful attire enrich the understanding, mature the judgment, or heal the disorders of the mind ? Can decorations derived from the labours of the insect, the animals of the forest, the birds of the wood, or the plants of the field, be worthy of the inordinate affection of a rational creature ? O

foolish and unwise, to glory in that which is a badge of our shame ! What childish, misplaced regard is this ! And yet how astonishing is its influence ! Who is there that is not, or has not been affected by it ? It may be said by some, that they can well afford it, and that they have a right to do as they please with their own property : but admitting that some difference may be made for situations in life, how great the folly of placing our happiness in mere external ornament ! To many, dress is like money ; it is the root of all evil ! When the heart has been set upon this idol, what vast portions of time has it swallowed up ; what vanity has it excited ; what ridiculous figures has it sometimes metamorphized men into ; what neglect of important duties has it occasioned ; and what property has it consumed !* How many poor families might be supplied by retrenching the luxuries of dress, and the prodigality of ornament ! After all, what is more admirable than simplicity ? What *rationality* is there in choosing a cumbersome, expensive form of dress, while one of a more easy, cheap, and convenient nature

* Tertullian complained, that there were some in his time who did not scruple to hang at their wives' ears the value of a good farm.

will suffice ! What *charity* is there in lavishing so much upon ourselves ; while with less expence we could make the hearts of multitudes glad ? What *dignity* is there in mere apparel ; and how little must that mind be that prides itself in it ? What *certainty* is there of long enjoyment of it ? How short is the path from the wardrobe to the grave ; and how quick the exchange of the costly raiment for the shroud ! And what a melancholy tale to relate of many, that they have spent a whole life in adorning their own persons, but never presented a garment to the naked, to screen them from the cold ; never thought of the sufferings and miseries of the poor ; but, while clad in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day, suffered many to perish at their door. What felicity then is there in this transient appearance of finery ? O contracted pleasure that is bound up in a garment ; precarious good, that a moth, a worm will destroy ! Poor enjoyment that depends on the quality and the form of apparel ! Mispent time, that is employed in idolizing the decorated form at the toilet. Alas ! it is there that too many, pleased with their ornaments, forget what manner of persons they are ! There too do many stand,

who, wanting the attraction of personal beauty, endeavour to supply the sad deficiency by the labour of art.* Go, reader, and look into another, a different mirror. Hear him who said, "Take no thought for your body what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment? Why take ye thought for raiment, consider, the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek :) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things."†

* Such as are destitute of virtue and of natural beauty, and yet hope to commend themselves by their goodly apparel, are guilty of an error similar to that which Clementi reports of a painter's boy. The boy wished to paint the fair Helena of Greece; but wanting art to set forth her beauty, daubed her entirely over with gold, making her very rich, because he could not make her beautiful.

† Matt. vi. 28 to 34.

Here then is a command worthy of attention. And is it not of more consequence that the soul be clothed with the garments of righteousness, than the body be adorned with superfluous attire? How infinitely superior is it to have a well-informed mind; a soul devoted to the interest of truth and religion—than to be distinguished only for adopting every new fashion, and to be absorbed in the silly admiration of dress! The body must soon be unclothed, and lie down in the bed of death; nay, it must soon decay; and be put out of sight: but the soul enlightened and arrayed with the ornaments of truth and grace, shall not be deprived of its beauty, nor ever lose its lustre and glory. Through the varying scenes of life; in the last hour of death; and through eternal ages it shall sing, “ I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels.”*

But you may ask, is no attention to be paid to our apparel? are we to live like hermits, and care not how we appear? is it absolutely sinful

* Isa. lxi. 10.

to adopt any new fashion that may arise, and which perhaps may be exceedingly convenient? Here you are not to go into an opposite extreme. You are not required to be singular, for the sake of singularity; much less are you to neglect your apparel and become the sloven. Decency is always requisite; without this you cannot well be considered as a fit member of society; nor are you likely to be useful in the sphere in which you move. But the great evil of which I have been speaking, is, an inordinate attention to dress. This has been a fatal snare to multitudes, and especially to the young! That a new mode may be adopted which may prove advantageous, none, we suppose, will consider as improper. Improvements may be made in this, as well as in every other system. But what a folly is it when it becomes a person's all; when it engrosses all the conversation; when it occupies the whole mind; when every thing must be rendered subservient to it! Surely then it must be an evil. Let us beware therefore of this fascinating influence; let us elevate our thoughts to nobler objects; let us pray, that we may be adorned with superior ornaments; that our faith may be genuine; our hearts right with God: then, when the earthly house of this tabernacle is

dissolved, we shall have a building of God. Then shall we be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, and mortality be swallowed up of life.”*

TALENTS.

WHAT shall we say of talents, intellect, knowledge, wit? Are these sufficient to constitute happiness? Do their possessors live in a different world to others? Does the applause which they obtain render them invulnerable against the arrows of adversity? Are they strangers to sorrow? Have they no moments of vacancy and uneasiness? Alas! how many have endeavoured to climb the hill of knowledge, and, after all their toil to gain the point, how cold and cheerless have they found it! Leaving the multitude below, where they enjoyed social intercourse, they have ascended to dwell among the sons of science, with the hope of tasting higher joys, and breathing a purer air than others; but even here, with all these advantages, they have found vanity and

* 2 Cor. v. 1—3.

vexation of spirit. For intellect, *what is it?* It may be said, it is the glory of man, and that which distinguishes him as belonging to an elevated order of beings. But have we not seen sometimes, that those who have been celebrated as having a strong genius, have also had a tincture of insanity connected with it? The mind has been too large for the body; and the progress made has been such, that the man has been lost in reveries, and the soul overwhelmed by an inundation of ideas! As to human knowledge, *what is it?* It is said to be power; but is it a power we can always keep? Is it a throne on which we can always reign? Is its authority always obeyed? Is its influence always mild, beneficial, and kind? Is there no ignorance mixed up with it? Is there no vanity attendant on it? No pride that follows it? Alas! it has often been abused and perverted to the worst of purposes; rendered its possessor tyrannical; exposed him to the shafts of envy; caused him to be forgetful of the weakness of human nature; and, after all, left him in a state of poverty and distress!

That this also is vanity will appear, if we consider the labour of attaining it. By the entrance of sin into the world, the understanding is clouded, the faculties of man are injured!

He very dimly perceives intellectual objects. His powers want repeated strokes to awaken them ! His judgment is defective ; his memory is weak and treacherous ; besides, external objects divert his attention, and the glare of sublunary things captivate his senses ! In order to rise superior, therefore, to the state of ignorance in which we are by nature, there must be exertion. The fruit that grows on the tree of knowledge does not spontaneously drop upon us ; but must be gathered by activity, patience, and perseverance. Now this cannot always be done without difficulty. How soon are the animal spirits exhausted ; the application required affects the brain ; means for the preservation of health are neglected ; a habit of study is contracted, which becomes very injurious, and at last terminates in death. Let us remember too how humiliating it is, that, after all our researches, how little knowledge we can obtain ! The delineation of scripture is as true as affecting : “ we are but of yesterday, and know nothing.”* A contracted mind, a superficial pedant may imagine that he knows every thing ; but they who know most, are most conscious of their ignorance. They see such vast objects before them ; such an extended circle

* Job viii. 9.

around them ; so many impediments to be removed ; so many objections to be answered, that they are sometimes overwhelmed and confounded with the reflection on the narrow limits of human capacities.

But even those who have attained the highest degrees ; who are allowed to excel ; who have gone farther than any before them—can they say their knowledge makes them happy ; that they are truly satisfied ; that they live in a world of their own, where no cloud obscures their light, no tempests beat upon their habitations, no bitter streams flow by their side, no noxious vapours infest their atmosphere ! Alas ! no : they are mortals still ; they have desires yet to be gratified ; wants to be supplied ; difficulties to meet. Nor is it an uncommon thing for those who are distinguished for some extraordinary talent, to be remarkable for some singular defect. As if the Almighty would stain the pride of human glory, he suffers the brightest intellectual sun to be sometimes eclipsed ; the most exalted genius to be degraded ; and suspends the energies of those minds renowned for wisdom and knowledge ; so that we have been filled with astonishment, in hearing, that they who possessed almost the powers of angels, should manifest the weakness of

children, or the conduct of idiots. Let us not then make this our idol ; for suppose we could travel round the world, and gather information from every quarter ; suppose we understood all languages ; could penetrate into the arcana of nature ; could explain the laws of matter and spirit ; could with vision more perceptive than any yet ever known, see into all the varied operations of the surrounding systems—I say, after all the possession of this vast treasure, we should find still something wanting to complete our happiness. Let not any suppose, however, that I am now degrading human literature, or that any man should be content with ignorance. No. Intellectual darkness was brought into the world by sin ; and the more we can diminish it the better. He deserves praise who is determined not to live in ignorance, but who retires frequently from the world to think, to study, to expand his mind, to weigh things in the balance of truth, and to converse with ancient as well as modern writers for the sake of improvement. But there is a wide difference between this, and worshipping, if I may so speak, an intellectual god, and placing all our happiness in human knowledge ; in imagining that a sparkling wit, a brilliant imagination, a fine taste, or literary attainments, form all the feli-

city of man. Alas ! how many have risen to celebrity in the world by their vast powers ; and yet have shewn us, that they were neither the most virtuous, the most moral, the most happy, nor the most useful members of society. There is, however, knowledge that in no sense can be called vain. It is the knowledge of God and ourselves. Thus saith the Lord, " Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might ; let not the rich man glory in his riches. But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth : for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."*

Reader seek then this knowledge ; this is superior to all other. This impresses the heart, engages the affections, ornaments the character, regulates the passions, enlarges the mind, conquers the world, supports in death, and leads to heaven. This is " the one thing needful, the good part, which cannot be taken from us."†

* Jerem. ix. 23, 24.

† Luke x. 42.

FRIENDSHIP.

HOW ready are we to conclude ourselves happy in the enjoyment of friendship. And who will say this is not a blessing? Is it not pleasant to indulge in kind and mutual intercourse; to find one into whose bosom we can pour all our cares; to whom we can communicate all our joys and sorrows, and who is ready to sympathise with us under all the vicissitudes of life! This certainly is no inferior privilege. But after all, *what is it?* Does it always afford relief to us? Can our friends always meet the exigency of our case; remove our difficulties, assuage our grief, preserve us from danger? Are there not moments when the exertions of humanity are useless, and nothing but a divine hand can give relief? Have we not also too many instances of the fickleness of human nature, and the uncertainty of friendship? Did Abraham feel nothing in the departure of Lot, who had been his companion, and came with him up out of Egypt? Did not David mourn over the treachery of Ahithophel? "It was not (says he) an enemy that reproached me, then I could have born it; neither was it he

that hated me, that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him: But it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, my acquaintance: we took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.* Yea (he says) mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.† Must it not have been, also, a sore trial to him, that Joab, after all the battles he fought, should be guilty of treachery. While Ahab lived, he was honoured as a king, and many seemed happy in having an opportunity of shewing their love to him by being permitted to keep one of his children.‡ But no sooner was Ahab overthrown, and Jehu proclaimed king, than they adored this rising sun, and at his command, instead of guardians, became butchers to their master's children, and sent their heads to Jehu as a present.†

On Job's three friends, professed indeed that they were come to comfort him; but did they not add to his grief by charging him with hypocrisy? so that he was obliged to say,

* Psalm lv. 12, 13, 14.

† Ibid. xl. 9.

‡ 2 Kings x.

"miserable comforters are ye all, and physicians of no value!"* Paul had to complain, that though, at one time, his friends were so much attached as to be ready almost to lay down their lives for him; yet, when their presence would have most cheered him, he says, "no man stood by me; but all forsook me!"† When he was first brought to the knowledge of the truth, and made his escape to Jerusalem, the disciples were afraid of him; not believing him to be a disciple: but it is said, that Barnabas took him, and brought him to the Apostles; then, after commending him to them, he became his companion, both in his labours and persecutions: yet, afterwards, a dispute arose between these two eminent men, relative to the selection of Mark; and the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder, one from the other.‡ Such examples as these should teach us the mutability of human friendship; and that, valuable as it is, too great confidence must not be placed on it. While it may be cherished and indulged, yet it must be in subordination to a superior

* Job xvi. 2. Ibid. xii. 4.

† Rom. xvi. 4. Acts xxviii. 15. 2 Tim. iv. 16.

‡ Acts xv. 36.

good. The creature must not be a substitute for the Creator: "He will not give his glory to another;"* and it is his command, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?"† Indeed, it has been no uncommon thing, that they who have shewn the greatest friendship for a while, have, from some circumstance or other, suddenly changed, and disappointed the hopes of those who confided in them. Their conduct has proved so strange, their behaviour so distant, that it has been pronounced unaccountable. Let it be remembered, too, that they who thus violate friendship, are capable of doing us more harm than others! They have seen our weaknesses; they know our views and dispositions: we lie at their mercy. It is easy too for them to magnify, when they have a cause to serve, or a base purpose to answer. But suppose friendship be real; it must be interrupted at last. Death, the conqueror of all, will tear our friends from us, or us from them. O how many have been snatched away in the very moment when basking in the rays of friendship. How many have gone to

* Isa. xlii. 8.

† Ibid. ii. 22.

the grave weeping over the last remains of their departed friends! Ah, how melancholy the remembrance of those hours which have passed away in delightful converse! How painful to view the spot; to visit the dwelling; to tread the path where formerly we enjoyed the pleasures of sincere friendship! "How has the tribute we owed to their memory been paid down in tears!" But they are gone the way whence they shall not return. Let us recollect that we are hastening after them; that we also are travelling to the house appointed for all living; and must shortly leave this vale of sorrow.

What shall we say as to domestic felicity? Of all sublunary enjoyments, we must confess it is one of the greatest. Marriage is honourable in all; and is an institution founded in paradise by God himself. When entered into with proper views, when the blessing of the Almighty is implored; when affection is real and sincere, there can be little doubt of happiness, as far as that word can extend to temporal enjoyment. But still let us not deceive ourselves: it is not a state where there are no cares, no anxieties, no sorrows. Religion indeed sanctifies all. There she erects an altar sacred to the Most High; teaches us

to bend the knee in humble adoration and praise; wipes away the tears that flow; supports under all the changing scenes of life, and points to that glory and blessedness which shall never fade away. Where this however is not found, the domestic circle too often presents us with scenes of a painful kind. Intemperance, disorder, vanity, dress, pleasure, gambling, and prodigality, characterise too many families; and from thence arise poverty, disease, jealousy, bickerings, discontent, opposition, and sometimes death itself. Husbands and wives, parents and children, have risen up against each other, and been guilty of the most enormous cruelties; so that this state has not always proved a state of felicity, nor answered the end for which it was designed. What an incomparable wife had king Herod in his Mariamne; yet he caused her to be put to death! The usurper Richard III. through his unkindness to his wife, caused such an infirmity as brought her to the grave. What the conduct of the cruel Henry VIII. was, to his wives, is well known. So, on the other side: Semiramis, queen of the Assyrians, desired her husband to permit her to reign with sovereign power for one day; and after he had granted her

request, she commanded him to be slain. Jane, queen of Naples, caused three of her husbands to be put to death. Have not parents, also, proved unnatural? Brutus caused two of his sons to be put to death, only because he feared they were not true to the commonwealth. Torquatus, a Roman general, slew his son for disobeying a command which he had given him. Soliman, emperor of the Turks, caused his son Mustapha, who was a prince of great hopes, and the best of all the Ottoman family, to be strangled, only because he wished to see his father and his court. Mothers have been cruel to their children. How cruel and unnatural was Athaliah to destroy, not only all her grandchildren, but all the seed royal of the house of Judah. Irene, mother to the emperor Constantine VII. caught him by policy, and caused his eyes to be plucked out of his head, that she might reign in his place. Children also have been cruel to their parents, and ill requited them for their kindness. "What a graceless son was Absalom to so gracious a father! He not only wished to take his crown from off his head, but endeavoured to take his head from off his shoulders."

Nero, that monster of mankind, caused his

mother to be put to death ; and afterwards to be ripped up, that he might see where he once lay.

Selim, the great Turk, and the first of that name, caused his father Bajazet to be poisoned, by the help of his janizaries.

The emperor Henry V. by force deprived his father of the empire, and caused him to die miserably in prison.

The emperor Frederick III. was miserably slain by his son Manfroy, after a reign of thirty years.

Adolphus, king of Geldria, led his father in the night five miles, in the depth of winter, to a miserable prison, where he confined him. And when the emperor offered him conditions to let him out, he answered, he would rather cast his father headlong into a well, and throw himself after him, than he would let him out on such terms.

Brethren also have sought one another's ruin. How did Esau hate his brother Jacob ! He resolved to slay him ; and on that account caused him to go into another country, where he continued twenty years an exile from his father's house.*

* Gen. xxvii. 41.

How did Joseph's brethren hate him ! When they saw the anguish of his soul, their bowels did not relent, neither for his sake nor for the sake of his father.*

What a dreadful slaughter did Abimelech make of his brethren, the sons of Gideon ! he slew threescore and ten of them upon one stone.†

Jehoram, the wicked king of Judah, a graceless son of a gracious father, king Jehoshaphat, slew all his brethren at one time.‡

Romulus, that he might reign alone, slew his brother Remus, only for leaping over the wall of his new city.

Bassiarus, the son of Severus, the Roman emperor, that he might enjoy the sovereignty alone, slew his brother with a dagger, as he lay in his mother's arms !

The above are not selected as characteristic of domestic life, nor should these instances tend to make us disgusted with society ; but they afford us awful specimens of human depravity, and show us how evil principles, when indulged, violate all the laws of nature and reason ; that happiness is not always to be found in near relatives ; nor human friendship always to be relied on.

* Gen. xxxviii.

† Judg. ix. 5.

‡ 2 Chr. xxi. 4.

Reader, have you seen the inconstancy of man; have you considered the frailty of human nature; or have *you* suffered by the unfaithfulness of those from whom you expected better things?—Remember, there is a Friend above, whose counsels you do well to follow; on whose faithfulness you may depend; and whose presence can afford you the highest enjoyment, not only in the midst of changing scenes, and dying friends, but in the valley of the shadow of death, and in the realms of eternal glory.

ALL WORLDLY PROSPERITY.

FINALLY, as to all the world and the highest state of prosperity, *what is it?* The apostle says, “the fashion (the masquerade) of this world passeth away.”* “It is, says Solomon, Vanity of Vanities, yea, all is Vanity.”† As one observes, “These earthly things, though they make a fair and gaudy show, yet it is all nothing *but show* and appearance. As bubbles blown into the air will represent a variety of

* 1 Cor. vii. 31.

† Eccl. i. 2.

orient and glittering colours, through the reflection of light cast upon them ; so truly this world, this earth on which we live is nothing else but a great bubble, blown up by the breath of God in the midst of the air where it now hangs. It sparkles with ten thousand glories ; not that they are so in themselves, but only that they seem so to us through the false light by which we look upon them. If we come to grasp it like a thin film, it breaks, and leaves nothing but wind and disappointment in our hands : as history reports of the fruits that grow near the dead sea, where once Sodom and Gommorrah stood : they appear very fair and beautiful to the eye, but if they be crushed, turn immediately to smoke and ashes.

Indeed, the whole use of what we so much dote upon, is merely fancy,* and to make ourselves needy we have invented an artificial kind of riches ; which are no more necessary to the service of sober nature, than jewels and brace-

* Thrassyllus, it is said, noted down all the ships that arrived at the port of Athens, thinking them and their merchandise to be all his own. And when cured of that pleasant madness, confessed that he never in his whole life enjoyed so much content, as in that conceited wealth those ships brought him. Thus, alas ! too many solace themselves with imaginary good, and suppose they possess much, when after all they have nothing.

lets were to the Plane Tree which Xerxes so ridiculously adorned. And although we eagerly pursue these things, and count ourselves poor and indigent without them, yet, possibly right reason will dictate that they are no more needful to us, than to brute, or senseless creatures; and that it would be altogether as ridiculous for a man to be decked with them, as for a beast or plant, were it but as uncommon. These precious trifles when they are hung about us, make no more to the warmth, or defence of the body, than if they were hung upon a tree, they could make its leaves more verdant, or its shade more refreshing. Doth any man lie the softer because his bed posts are gilt? doth his meat and drink relish the better because served up in gold? Is his house more convenient, because better carved or painted? or are his clothes more fit, because more fashionable than others? And if they are not necessary to these natural uses, all that is left them is but fancy and opinion. Indeed mankind cozen themselves by compact, and by setting a value upon things that are rare, have made many think themselves poor; whereas God made all equally wealthy, had they not artificially impoverished themselves. It is no-

thing but conceit that makes the difference between the richest and the meanest, if both enjoy necessities. For what are all superfluous riches, but a load that men's covetousness lays upon them? They are like Roman slaves, that were wont to carry heavy burdens of bread, upon their backs, whereof others eat as large a share as they. Whatever is more than sufficient to satisfy the cravings of nature, is of no other use but only to look upon. Our lands, our houses, and fair estates are but pictures of things. The poorest who see them, enjoy as much of them as ourselves: yea, and if we could be contented with reason, every thing that we behold with our eyes, is as much ours as it is the owners."*

Reader, if these things be so, then we may learn the folly of setting our hearts on earthly things. They are not worthy that supreme attachment we often pay to them. Should not our affections be fixed on objects suitable to our nature? Is it wise to strive for that which is not congenial with our happiness? What should we think of a merchant if he purchased a capacious vessel, fitted it out at a great expence, and made a long and dangerous voyage, only to

* Hopkins.

bring home a few worthless pebbles? Now this is but a picture of the conduct of those who are seeking for happiness, in mere sublunary things. They labour and toil, they are at great cost, they encounter the boisterous waves, they surmount many dangers, and after all what do they obtain, but a few trifles, while they leave the precious treasures behind? There are very few but what like to have something to show for the pains they have taken; but what have the men of this world to produce, as worthy of notice and approbation? Let us search their cabinet; let us ask for the reward they have received for their labours: Alas! instead of being able to show us any thing valuable; on the contrary, we can hardly discern any thing but the evil effects which their rashness, sensuality, and imprudence had brought on their constitution, family, or property! Now he who looks higher than the present scene, who, while he thankfully enjoys the blessings of Providence, and seeks the one thing needful, finds a different reward. His voyage indeed is not without difficulties, he is not disappointed in his object; he does not labour for nought, his vessel contains the inestimable treasure which cannot be taken from him. "Happy therefore it is said

is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies : and all the things thou canst desire, are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her ; and happy is every one that retaineth her.”*

It is this then that makes us rich toward God, and produces real contentment in the mind. Here is no emaciated constitution through sin ; no bitter work for repentance ; no stinging reflections on lost character ; no wishing for annihilation ; no cursing the day of our birth ; no black despair, and fearful looking for of judgment. No ! guilt is done away ; divine light cheers up the countenance ; peace sways her sceptre over the soul, and sweet hope brightens into radiance in the view of an eternal world. What are all things here in comparison with this ? Why, even the poorest christian may vie with all the world.—“ Drop

millions of gold, boundless revenues, ample territories, crowns and sceptres ; and a poor, despised christian lays his one God against all these, and beggars them all*.”

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

HAVING now taken a short survey of earthly good : having endeavoured to answer the enquiry as to the present state, let us proceed to make some enquiries as to those important objects which relate to our future welfare. And now, my reader, have you ever seriously considered, that there is a God ? Can you for a moment suppose the contrary ? What rational account could you give of the existence of all things, without believing in a Supreme Power ? How extraordinary is it, if there be no God, that a sense of a divinity is impressed upon every man's mind. How strange would it sound, if one should say, the house in which you now are, erected itself, or came there by chance ; that the different apartments all arranged themselves just as you see them, that the furniture happily met together with-

out the contrivance and design of any living creature ; or, that the whole was there from eternity ? Would not this be absurd in the extreme, but how much more so, to suppose that the sun, the moon, the stars, the trees, the seas, the mountains, all came by chance, or existed of themselves from everlasting ? But, my reader, I will not insult your understanding so much, as to suppose you are an atheist : I will suppose you to believe in the existence of a God. This being granted, let me ask, have you ever considered what he is ? has your mind ever been solemnized with the becoming thoughts of his greatness ? If not, is it not absolutely necessary, is it not high time, that you, as a rational, accountable creature, should seek to know him ? What ! live in his world, fed at his table, clothed by his liberality, supported by his power, and not know him ? What ! not know your friend, your Maker, your benefactor, your preserver ? What ! at his disposal ; your life dependent on his will ; your happiness derived from him alone, and your all at his controul—and not know him ? What ! behold the heavens, adorned with light ; the earth, variegated with ten thousand beauties ; the pastures, clothed with flocks ; the vallies, covered over with corn ;

and the years, crowned with his goodness,—and all for your benefit and pleasure—and not know him? What! behold his lightnings dart their fires; hear his thunders roll along the heavens: feel the earth trembling under you, while the dark and awful tempest is sweeping all before it—and not know him? O reader! with what have you been engaged? what objects have exercised your attention, that you should not have considered your obligation to him, “in whom you live, move and have your being?” Have you not been lost to reflection, have you not been guilty of the highest ingratitude? Come then, and let us with reverence contemplate his perfections. Observe his *spirituality*; for he is not flesh and blood as we are, but a spirit invisible, whom no man hath seen or can see; neither hath any man heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.* His *unity*, for though there be a plurality of persons in the divine Essence, yet there is but one God. “Hear, O Israel, for the Lord our God is one Lord. I am the first, I am the last, and besides me there is no God; before me there was no God formed, neither shall

* John iv. 24. 1 Tim. vi. 16. Hebrews xi. 27. John ii. 18. Job v. 57.

there be after me.”* His *eternity and self-existence*; “for he is the eternal God, and liveth for ever and ever.”† His *holiness*. “There is none holy as the Lord. He is the rock; his work is perfect; all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he.”‡ His *immutability*; “for he is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. I am the Lord; I change not, therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed. He is the same yester-day, to-day, and for ever.§ His *omniscience*; “His eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. He is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”¶ His *omnipresence*. “He filleth all in all. Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? Do I not fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.”** His *wisdom*. “He is wise in heart, he is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working; the only wise God.”†† His *power*. “The Lord

* Deut. vi. 4. iv. 35. † Deut. xxxiii. 27. Rev. iv. 9. ‡ Deut. xxxii. 4. § Num. xxiii. 19. Mal. iii. 6. Heb. xiii. 8. ¶ Prov. xv. 3. Heb. iv. 11. 1 John i. 3. ** Eph. i. 23. Jer. xxiii. 23, 24. †† Job ix. 4. Isaiah xxviii. 29. 1 Tim. i. 17.

is mighty in strength, excellent in power; who is like unto him? There is nothing too hard for the Lord: power belongeth unto God. He is almighty, and can do every thing.”* His *juitice*. “He is excellent in judgment, and in plenty of justice. He is righteous in all his works which he doeth. He is just, and the justifier of them that believe.”† His *faithfulness*. “He is the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments. He is faithful who hath promised. He keepeth truth for ever.”‡ His *goodness*. He is good to all. The earth is full of his goodness. He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good.” His *mercy*. “As a father pitieth his children, so he pitieth them that fear him. His mercy endureth for ever. He will abundantly pardon.”***

Is not such a glorious being as this then worthy of your regard? Can any thing be more reasonable, than that you should fear,

* Job ix. 4. Job xxxvii. 23. Jer. xxxii. 17. Psalm lxii. 2. Job xlii. 2.

† Job xxxvii. 23. Dan. ix. 14. Rom. iii. 26.

‡ Deut. vii. 9. Heb. ii. 11. Psalm cxlvi. 6.

¶ Psalm cxlv. 9. Psalm xxxiii. 5. Matt. v. 45.

** Psalm ciii. 15. Psalm cxxxvi. Isa. v. 7.

love, and obey him? If the very heathen thought it proper to worship the objects in creation which were beneficial to them, how much more should you devote yourself to Him, who is the giver of every good and perfect gift? Consider that you have hitherto lived to little purpose, if you have not lived to Him. Let me intreat you, therefore, fervently to consider that this is essentially necessary to your present and everlasting welfare. Go, then, and kneel before Him. Retire, and confess your transgressions. Implore his grace, and seek his blessing. He will hear your supplications; he will be merciful unto you; he will not suffer you to seek in vain. He hath said, "Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find: knock, and the door shall be opened unto you."*

THE BIBLE.

SHOULD you begin to feel some concern about your final state; should you lament your ignorance, and complain that you have had

* Matt. vii. 7.

few advantages, and should you be desirous of instruction, then attend to a few hints I shall here suggest. You have heard, I suppose, of a book called the Bible ; but perhaps you have never read it with any attention. Now, *what is this book ?* Infidels and profligates would tell you, that it is a cunningly devised fable : because it does not countenance them in their licentiousness, they reject it. But, my reader, it is worthy of your perusal ; for it has all the marks of divine authority upon it. Man being an ignorant, sinful creature, unable by his own power to find out the way to happiness, stood in need of a divine revelation. Without this, we can gain no information as to a future state ; how we shall find acceptance with God ; how our sins are to be expiated, or justice satisfied. Now, here we find all that is necessary to be known, in relation to these important points. Here we are informed that God is just, and that, although we have broken his law and deserve his wrath, yet he is willing to forgive through the merits of his Son. So that, reader, you may take up this book with the highest joy, as containing what is of more importance than all things beside ; the delightful tidings of salvation to lost sinners. Though

its style is sublime ; its language majestic ; yet there is a simplicity that runs through the whole, admirably adapted to our capacities. It was penned, indeed, at various times, by different writers, and in different places ; yet there is no contradiction : one grand harmony pervades the whole. Its prophecies, doctrines, providences, precepts, history, promises ; all tend to the same object—the glory of God in the salvation of man. You need not suspect it therefore to be the production of designing and wicked men ; since it opposes their system, condemns their practice, and proclaims their misery and destruction. That it is divinely inspired, is evident, if you consider how its prophecies have been accomplished ; what miracles have been wrought in confirmation of its truth ; how holy, how devoted, how agreed were its writers ; how wonderfully it has been preserved, in the midst of the greatest opposition ; how exactly it describes things as they are ; and what astonishing effects it has produced. Now then, reader, this is the very book you should consult, in order to be wise unto salvation. “ It is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.”* This will furnish you with all

necessary information, both as to your duty towards God and man. Delay no longer, then, to consult it. Were you to be informed, that an epistle from some illustrious prince were directed to you, I suppose you would scarcely sleep till you had perused it. What agitation, what concern, what expectation would be raised in your breast! Now here is a volume actually addressed to you, which contains intelligence of the utmost importance, written by the finger of him who is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Here your character is drawn. Here your wants are stated. Here your condition is pointed out; here your remedy exhibited. Here you will find every thing essential to your happiness, for the life that now is, and that which is to come. Let a portion then be frequently read; implore light from heaven to understand, and for grace to practise it. Say with one of old, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. So shall you find that in knowing and keeping it there is great reward."*

* Psalm cxix. 18. Psalm xix. 11.

CHRISTIANITY.

HAVING now stated the authority and excellency of the Bible in a general way, it will be necessary to examine, more particularly, the important system it contains. In the former part of this little work, we have made some enquiries as to the nature and condition of man: we considered him as frail, depraved and subject to mortality. Now, in perusing the Bible we do not find it to be a treatise on astronomy, philosophy, politics, history, rhetoric, or any of the sciences; but here is one grand subject meets our eye. Now, then, the enquiry is, What is this; *what is 'it* that forms the prominent leading point of the sacred scriptures? It is, my reader, nothing less than the “glorious gospel of the blessed God.” It is a system of mercy; a display of the divine glory in the everlasting salvation of all who believe, through the merits of his Son Jesus Christ, and the purifying operations of the divine Spirit. Hear the language of scripture,—“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth

in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. Ye are washed; ye are sanctified; ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God. He is able to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God by him.”* From these scriptures, you may learn the nature, the cause, and the means of man’s salvation. But you may be ready to ask, is this system true? Here, then, my reader, let us answer the enquiry. It is well known that there were certain prophecies, delivered at sundry times, and in different places, relative to the advent of a Messiah that should atone for the transgressions of men. These prophecies have been exactly fulfilled, as to the personage, birth, character, circumstances, place of residence, life, sufferings, work,

* John iii. 16. 1 Tim. i. 15. Acts xiii. 38, 39.
1 Cor. vi. 11. Heb. vii. 25.

death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. Several writers were employed in composing his life, in which they all agreed, and whose testimony cannot be doubted, unless we doubt the truth of all history. Their narrations are simple, but not mean; luminous, but not dazzling; popular, but not declamatory; clear, but not systematic. There appears no design of writing for their own advantage, to perpetuate their own names, nor to gain applause from mankind. They record their own faults; they lavish no encomiums on themselves; they cast no reflections on others. They state the facts as they happened; they leave those facts to speak for themselves; they make no comments of their own. Considering how the Saviour was treated, with what contempt his cause was held by the world, they could not have been under any temptation to invent a story of this kind. This would have been to expose themselves to danger; it would have been studiously forging a lie, for the very purpose of condemning themselves to death. Had christianity been an imposture, the very manner which they took to establish it, would have been the most likely to have overthrown it at

once. The miracles, too, which were wrought were so numerous, so open, and of so singular and extraordinary a nature, that clearly proved it could be no imposition. Now it is certain that the apostles, although opposed by some, did gain very early credit, and met with success in the world. The facts recorded in the gospel they insisted on to the last ; nor could poverty nor persecution, reproach nor want, contempt nor threatening, sufferings nor death, change their sentiments, nor destroy their faith. Multitudes were brought to believe in the same doctrines : the system gained ground, and has been preserved to the present day, notwithstanding all the efforts of infidels and persecutors to stop its progress. Indeed, the evidence of the truth of christianity has always been accumulating. Consider its surprising propagation, and the wonderful effects it has had on mankind. Plato complained that he could not bring over the inhabitants of one village to live by the rules of his philosophy ; but this has abased the proud, civilized the barbarian, awakened the insensible, curbed the ambitious, reformed the prodigal, and conferred happiness and peace on millions of mankind. Whole nations

have felt its effects; civil institutions have been improved by it; the tone of morals has been raised; and even the very cruelties of war have been lessened by its influence. Nor, reader, must you forget that it is greatly confirmed by the accomplishment of its prophecies, in the various events now transpiring in the world. The very opposition of its adversaries, too, have also been overruled; and the evidence has gained considerable strength by the very attacks made against it. The testimonies of heathen writers might here be mentioned. Tacitus, who lived near the age of Christ or his apostles, assures us, that, in Nero's time, who began his reign about twenty years after Christ, that there were vast multitudes of christians, not only in Judea, but in Rome, against whom, it is well known, he raised the most violent persecution. The same author records, that Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, that Jesus was brought into judgment before him, and by him condemned and crucified. Julian the apostate, Porphyry, and Hierocles, all of them professed enemies to christianity, confessed that many miraculous cures and works, out of the ordinary course of nature, were wrought

by Christ. Pliny writes an account to the emperor Trajan, of the great multitude he every where found of them, and of the respectability of their moral character. Phlegon, in his Annals confessed, "That Jesus foretold several things, which came to pass according to his predictions." Besides these testimonies, many others might be brought forward, but these shall suffice. There is no reason to doubt, then, the truth of the christian religion; and who is there, that has any concern for his eternal happiness, that would wish it to be untrue? It is here that God is seen merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. It is here we find how sin can be pardoned, how our nature can be purified, and how to obtain everlasting life. Come then, reader; let me intreat you to examine this system for yourself. Take the Bible, and consider what it prohibits; what it commands; what it promises; what it holds up to your view as worthy of attention and regard. If you have hitherto so lived that you find yourself condemned by it, then consider it as the best friend that warns you of your danger. It will, indeed, give no countenance to sin; it

will not allow you to indulge in secret iniquity ; it will not suffer you to make light of it ; but, if you feel a sorrow for it,—if you know what it is to have a broken and contrite heart, it will be found to be the only remedy suited to your case. “ Come unto me,” said the Saviour, “ all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart ; and ye shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

THE SOUL.

BUT perhaps some of my readers care for none of these things ; or, if they do believe that christianity is true, it produces no effect on them. They live in a state of indifference, and care but little about their final happiness. Let me remind such, then, of their real state. Do you consider you possess an immortal soul ; that you have a vital principle within you that

* Matt. xi. 28—30.

can never be extinguished? Have you ever considered how capacious are its desires; how eagerly it is bent on the enjoyment of happiness; that after it has tried ten thousand objects, it flings them away, and wants thousands more; that its desires rise beyond the bounds of every thing here?

Does not this prove that there must be something higher than earthly enjoyments to satisfy it? And what is this but the supreme good? A soul without this is a world of confusion, of disappointed desires, of restlessness, of mortification, and of misery. But when God is the object of its affections; when he is the object of its dependance, then, and then alone, does its happiness begin: for thus hath the Almighty decreed that none of his creatures shall find happiness but in him, and that all beside shall be vanity and vexation of spirit.

While the soul possesses such capacious desires, consider too that it is immortal. Man is not a little animated matter, created with a few organs of sense, to move only for a few years in the present world. "If this were the case, the dignity of man would make his misery. His desires of immortal duration; his faculty of thinking and reflecting; of expanding and

perpetuating the mind; this superiority of soul that seems to elevate mankind above beasts—actually place the beast above the man, and render their condition enviable. They, content with their own organs, pleased with ranging the fields, and browsing the herbage, their desires need no restraint; all their wishes are satisfied; while the soul of man abounds on the one hand with insatiable desires, and on the other is confined amidst vain and unsatisfactory objects, and, on this account, must be unhappy.”* Consider then that you are an immortal being. You cannot annihilate yourself. You cannot fall into an eternal sleep. You cannot be lost amid the promiscuous croud that shall rise from the dead. “The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up;”† but you shall remain. No matter can crush, no fire can destroy, no floods can overwhelm, no power can put an end to your existence. Your duration cannot be measured. If once in ten thousand years a single grain of earth could be annihilated, the whole, in a course of time, might all be removed. If once in ten thousand years a

* Saurin.

† 2 Pet. iii. 10.

drop of water could be taken from the ocean, it might in time be exhausted. But what is this to eternity? After all, you would exist, and be no nearer to dissolution than at the first moment when you began to breathe. How awful then is the reflection, that you are created to live for ever! Whatever be your condition on earth, whether rich or poor, ignorant or learned, young or old, happy or miserable, you carry about with you an immortal spirit. You may banish reflection; but you are immortal still. You may plunge into scenes of licentiousness; but you cannot plunge into oblivion. You may degrade your nature; but you cannot destroy it. You may stifle conscience, and sin away your time; but you cannot sin away your immortality. Your mortal frame, it is true, will ere long perish; but your soul will not descend with it to the grave, but be transmitted to another world, to be happy or miserable for ever.

How solemn then is the thought; yet how strange that men should be affected with every thing more than this! Were you to lose your character, you would feel the deepest concern; were you deprived of all your property, how would you be grieved! If you were to lose a cause on which much of your happiness de-

pended, you would be ready to despair. If you were to lose the friend on whom you have set your affections, how would you weep and mourn! But the thought of losing yourself, of losing your soul, of being in danger of everlasting separation from God, the fountain of happiness, has never perhaps seriously affected your mind as it ought to have done! O how strange to put a less price, on your soul, than on any thing beside; to prefer a few sordid joys, a few transient vanities, an external show, to a treasure so infinitely valuable! How truly lamentable to see an immortal being so eager after the pleasures of sense; so alive to mere secular interest; so merged in the affairs of this life; and so keen in his pursuit after sublunary objects! yet, after all, when he obtains them they cannot make him happy; and if they could, he cannot carry them with him to another world.—Reader, say, is not this folly, is not this irrationality? “Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be ye horribly afraid; be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”* But we will now proceed more

* Jer. ii. 12, 13.

particularly to make some enquiries as to a future state.

THE RESURRECTION.

WE have already considered the shortness of human life, and that the soul cannot die with the body: but there is reason to believe that the body shall be raised again. This may appear a very mysterious doctrine to some, and the infidel may rather wish to cherish the idea of eternal sleep than believe it. But there is nothing *unreasonable* in the supposition. In the natural system we see something of it. Hence, says the Apostle, “Thou fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.* To say it is *impossible* would be ridiculous. If Omnipotence made all things at first, in the different forms in which they now appear, he can by the same power unite the parts which are dissolved. His omniscience distinguishes every atom in the universe; and we know that with him all things are possible. It is also *equitable*. The body is one constituent part of man. It is but right it should be rewarded or punished with the soul. The same body that sinned must suffer; the same that was devoted to the service of God

* 1 Cor. xv. 36.

shall be made glorious. Not that every particle that ever belonged to the human frame shall be restored to it ; but all that is necessary to identify it as the same body shall be raised. Hear the scripture : “ Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead ? There shall be a resurrection of the dead both of the just and the unjust. Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes behold, and not another. If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. We shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. He shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised. They that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”*

These are only a few passages out of many which might be quoted, and which plainly as-

* John v. 25, 26. Acts xxvi. 8. Ibid. xxiv. 15. Job xix. 26, 27. 1 Cor. xv. 4. 1 Thess. iv. 16. Dan. xii. 2.

sert that there shall be a resurrection. This shall be *universal*. All the sons and daughters of Adam, of every nation, age, or condition. What an awful sight to behold unnumbered millions all starting into existence to receive the sentence of their final doom! "The sea (says John) gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them."* At the voice of the Redeemer, every grave shall open, every tomb unfold its doors; the earth shall yield back its deposit; and the whole universe will afford the most grand, yet the most awful scene, ever beheld. The wicked, it is said, shall rise to shame; filled with consternation, and trembling to approach the awful Judge. The righteous shall rejoice with joy inexpressible. Their bodies shall be raised incorruptible, and be made like unto Christ's glorious body. No more subject to sickness nor pain, no external violence, nor internal disease shall injure them. They shall be raised spiritual bodies, active and refined, fit for spiritual exercises, and united to the soul, shall dwell for ever in the world of glory

When this shall take place we know not; and therefore how necessary is it that we be

* Rev. xx. 13.

ready, that we may be found of him in peace. Reader, can you look forward to this awful day without concern? Is it nothing to you how you shall rise? Have you never thought in what state you shall appear among all these myriads? If, in the dark gloom of this very night, you should hear the trumpet sound, would you not be filled with horror? would you not shriek and cry for mercy? or, would you endeavour to compose yourself with the thought that you should be as safe as others? O ask, whether it be not the highest wisdom *now* to consider your ways; for as you live and die, so will you be found at the resurrection morn. Now then is the time to seek a part in the resurrection of the just. Come and listen to him who said, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die: believest thou this?"*

* John xi. 25, 26.

But it is not only the resurrection of the body, but a

JUDGMENT

TO come, that we are called upon to believe. The description of this awful scene is given us by our Saviour in the following words:—"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I

was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."*

However some may affect to make light of this, let it be remembered, that the justice of God requires it. In the present state, the wicked are often exalted; while the righteous are depressed and persecuted. The principles of truth and justice do not sway all mankind. Religion has often been driven into a corner; while wickedness has triumphed, and been openly sanctioned and practised by the generality. How has ambition and the lust of dominion ravaged the world, thrown down altars, depopulated kingdoms, laid waste the fruitful fields,

and caused torrents of human blood to flow in all directions? How have some, lost to all sense of feeling, reason, or truth, played the tyrant, violated the most sacred rights, trampled on the laws of God, and fettered the consciences of men? Alas! what horrid spectacles of cruelty and blood have men produced by inquisitors, oppressors, and despots! While they have been rioting in luxury and wantonness, the innocent have been confined in the gloomy dungeon, bound to the stake, or expiring on the wheel. What scenes of iniquity have been carried on, too, by the hypocrite; the impostor; the ungrateful; the proud infidel! Shall all these be connived at by him who is an infinitely holy God? Is it possible that there shall be no retribution? Shall the blood of the slain cry for vengeance in vain? Shall crimes of the deepest dye be never so much as examined? and culprits, because they had means of escape here, be never brought to the tribunal of justice hereafter? Let not men deceive themselves; "for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."* Sometimes, indeed, we see the wicked suffer in this

* Eccl. xii. 14.

life ; for, as it has been often remarked, were not some punished here, men might conclude that God had forsaken the earth ; but if all were punished here, then they would imagine there was no judgment to come.

The accusations of conscience are no small testimonies in favour of the last judgment ; “ which show,” as the apostle observes, “ the work of the law written in their hearts ; their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts, the meanwhile, accusing, or else excusing one another.”* Some consciences, it is true, are seared as with a hot iron ; but there are few persons, but what have an idea of a supreme law, and that they are in a state of dependence and accountability. It is exceedingly difficult, indeed, for a man to divest himself of the belief of a Deity. He must be sunk nearly to the level of a brute, when this is the case. There are moments in the lives of the most dissipated, when conscience lifts up its voice, and makes the delinquent tremble. Could we but follow him into secrecy, it is more than probable but we should hear him saying, “ I cannot, after all, but think there is a God. I fear I must be accountable

* Rom. ii. 15.

to him. It is no use to flatter myself—I must die. These pleasures cannot be always enjoyed: these vices cannot be always kept secret. I am a miserable wretch. O that I had no existence!” Such, no doubt, are often the stings of conscience; such the moments of horror and misery; such the bondage, after all, of those who, while they talk of liberty, are themselves bound with the chains of guilt unto the judgment of the great day.

Of the nature and transactions of this solemn day we may observe, that the scriptures declare “that God will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, Jesus Christ. To him every knee shall bow; all judgment is committed to him.”* He shall appear too, when the world will be ill prepared to meet him. “For as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark; and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, as it was in the days of Lot. They did eat; they drank; they bought; they sold; they planted; they builded. But the same day that Lot went out

* Acts xvii. 31. Phil. ii. 10. John v. 21.

of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day that the Son of Man is revealed.”*

He will be clothed with majesty and honour. Once he appeared as a degraded criminal, crowned with thorns, and despised and rejected of men: then he shall come in great glory. With all authority, wisdom, dignity, justice, and power, will he judge the nations of the earth.

Then shall the righteous be separated from the wicked. The final sentence shall be pronounced. “The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.” Then shall all things here be dissolved; “the whole beautiful fabric shall be thrown down. As soon as the destroying angel has sounded the last trumpet, the everlasting mountains fall; the foundations of the world shall be shaken; the beauties of nature, the decorations of art, the labour of industry shall perish in one common flame. The globe itself shall return into its ancient chaos without form and void; or, like a star fallen from the heavens, shall be effaced from the uni-

* Luke xvii. 26—30.

verse, and its place shall know it no more." Reader, are you prepared for this solemn day? Whatever be your condition now, remember you will form one of that vast and awful assembly; for "we must *all* appear before the judgment seat of Christ."* The rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant, young and old, the righteous and the wicked must here all meet together. Were you charged as a criminal, and shortly to stand before an earthly tribunal, would it not fill you with the greatest concern? Would you delay enquiry? would you wish to leave every thing to the last moment? Would you not rather prepare to meet your trial? Would you not be all anxiety to know the decision? but how much more ought you to be concerned about your final state! Here is a Judge, before whom you must stand, of infinite dignity and glory. The cause is of all others the most important. The witnesses will be numerous, and their testimony certain. The event of the decision will be inexpressibly awful—either happiness or misery for ever. Now, with a view of all this before you, can you say it is all nothing to you? that the

business of this life, the pleasures of this world, are all you aim at and desire? Is this to act like a reasonable creature? O, consider how awful it will be to appear at that solemn tribunal in the great day, without ever having known the way of salvation! to be numbered with those who shall be found guilty, and “be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power!”* Perhaps, like multitudes of others, you indulge a hope that this will not be so. But is hope all the evidence you can produce? You must possess something more than this, or your case is deplorable. There must be faith, as well as hope; a faith that credits the divine testimony; a faith that “purifieth the heart, that overcometh the world, that worketh by love, and counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.”† In the exercise of this, you may look forward with joy to this awful day; but without it, you can neither please God here, nor be accepted of him hereafter.‡

* 2 Thess. i. 9.

† 2 Philip. iii. 8.

‡ Heb. xi. 6.

Let us now make some enquiry as to the future states of happiness and punishment. And first, as to

FUTURE HAPPINESS.

SOME have entertained strange ideas of the heavenly world ; they have supposed it to consist in the enjoyment of sensual, rather than spiritual pleasures. But if heaven be the residence of pure and holy beings, their joys must be infinitely above every thing of a carnal nature. This, therefore, is too gross an idea to attach to the celestial paradise. What then is heaven ? Here we must acknowledge our inability fully to describe it ; for “ eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”*

We may, however, form some idea from the terms used in the sacred scriptures. It is called a kingdom.† There, not only the Saviour reigns in all his glory, but the saints sit on his throne with him. Here they are persecuted and oppressed, and often participate but a small portion of this world’s good ;

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

† Luke xii. 32.

but there, it is said, they shall be kings and priests unto God for ever. Never shall they be conquered again, nor disinherited of their crown. Their robes are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. As the Romans, when they liberated their bond-servants, presented them with a white garment, as a badge of their freedom; so the saints, in a better world, shall be arrayed with the righteousness of the Redeemer; and purified by the divine Spirit, they shall shine forth as the sun for ever.

As it will be a cessation from all labour and toil, it is called a rest.* Here, the saints have to struggle with the enemy; to work while it is day; and to persevere under all opposition: there, they rest from their labours, and enjoy uninterrupted peace. No more shall they wrestle with sins, and doubts, and fears. Never will they be called again into the field of battle: their enemies shall be all conquered, their fears all subside, their armour be taken off, and laid aside for ever.

It is said to be a better country.† Here, whatever are our prospects, however favoured with the blessings of Providence, we are

* Heb. iv. 9.

† Heb. xi. 16.

still encompassed with infirmity, and surrounded with danger: there we shall possess a perfect nature; disease will never attack our frame; the enemy will never invade our possession; our sun will never decline; our atmosphere will be perpetually serene; our prospects unbounded; our treasures inexhaustible: our society delightful, and our liberty secured for ever.

Again, it is compared to a city,* “a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” The stately cities, the lofty palaces, the splendid temples on earth, must all decay: but this is founded on infinite power and love, and abideth for ever. Here dwells the heavenly Monarch, in all the glories of his nature, surrounded by angels and archangels, and all the spirits of the just made perfect. Here are the most extensive privileges; here all the citizens of heaven unite in adoring and praising their glorious King. Here he wipes away all tears from their eyes; there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither any more pain, for the former things are passed away.”†

Before the Saviour left the world he con-

* Heb. xi. 10.

† Rev. xxi. 4.

soled his disciples with the prospect of heaven as a place in which are many mansions. "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that, where I am, there ye may be also."*

Here many of the saints move in a low and contracted sphere: there they shall be elevated to great glory. They shall possess mansions, which no vicissitude shall deface, which time cannot destroy; mansions, which cost an infinite price, even the blood of the Son of God. These too are said to be *many*. Bigotry indeed would lessen the number; illiberality would place only a few solitary beings there, and those too gathered out of one insulated spot; but he who dwells on high, he who knows the extent and glory of the heavenly world, hath said, "that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.† I beheld, and lo!

* John xiv. 1, 2, 3.

† Matt. viii. 11.

(says John) a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.”*

It is denominated a paradise. “This day (said the Saviour to the dying thief) thou shalt be with me in paradise.”† Here flows the pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb.‡

The paradise of Adam was on earthly ground; the enemy obtained admission, and brought death into the world and all our woe: but this is celestial, where no poisonous serpent shall sting, no bitter waters flow, no destructive tempest rage. “Here is Jesus, the rose of Sharon, and lily of the valley, the plant of renown, the unforbidden tree of knowledge, and unguarded tree of life.”§ Never shall the blessed inhabitants be cast out; for there shall be no more curse; never again in the sweat of their face shall they eat bread; never shall they be filled with shame, and hide themselves from the presence of the Lord God. There shall be no night there; and they need no candle, nei-

* Rev. vii. 9. † Ib. xxii. 1. ‡ Luke xxiii. 43.

§ Brown.

ther light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light ; and they shall reign for ever and ever.*

Again, it is compared to a “ treasure, an eternal weight of glory.† This is a treasure spiritual in its nature, satisfactory in its enjoyment, and eternal in its duration. We can weigh the glory of the world, and count all its treasures ; but this is beyond computation. Earthly riches cannot be secured ; moth and rust corrupt, thieves break through and steal : but this treasure is subject to no decay ; though constantly enriching its possessor, yet it still remains the same. It is an incorruptible crown, that fadeth not away.‡

From these figures, then, we may learn, that the happiness of heaven is every way great. The source of this felicity is the presence of God and the Lamb. Hence it is said, “ that the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it ; and the Lamb is the light thereof.”§ In his presence there is fulness of joy. It is here only that a rational creature can find rest. We shall be satisfied when we awake up after his likeness. Here we see through a glass,

* Rev. xxii. 5.

† Matt. vi. 20. 2 Cor. iv. 17.

‡ 1 Pet. iv. 4.

§ Rev. xxi. 23.

darkly ; but there we shall see him as he is, and be like him too. With what inexpressible joy shall we gaze on the Lamb that was slain ! How will our hearts glow with love, and our souls be absorbed in gratitude and delight ! There, too, shall the saints hold communion with each other, and with the angels of God. No ignorance, no reserve, no distance, no envy, no misunderstanding shall be found there. How delightful is well-ordered society, even in this imperfect state ; but how infinitely so, when all shall be purity, love, joy, and praise ! Never, as yet, have all the saints met together to form the general assembly of the First-born ; but there shall all be collected, never to separate more. With the patriarchs and prophets, martyrs and confessors, apostles and ministers, and all the useful servants of the Most High, shall we dwell for ever. There we shall mingle our services with theirs, and ascribe glory and praise to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever. Reader, is this true—that everlasting happiness awaits them that fear God ? And have you no concern for the enjoyment of it ? O remember, that here you have no continuing city : learn then to seek one to come. Consider, your time is passing away ; and that the present life is the only opportunity

you have of obtaining an interest in this kingdom. Now the gates are open; and the promise is made to all who seek, that they shall find. "Set then your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth;" so, when heart and flesh fail, you shall be received into everlasting habitations, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

AND *what is this?* This is an awful question; but awful as it is, it becomes us to make the enquiry. Future punishment, then, consists in the most painful sensations, arising from a guilty conscience; a privation of celestial happiness; an eternal separation from the ever blessed God, and the society of the righteous. As to the place of this punishment, it is needless for us to enquire: its reality we cannot doubt, if we believe in divine revelation. "The wicked shall be turned into hell and all the nations that forget God. He shall say also to them on the left hand, De-

part, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. These shall go away into everlasting punishment.* The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, to be admired in all them that believe.”†

Now, as God is the fountain of all happiness; as it is his presence that constitutes heaven, so to be separated from him must be a source of inexpressible misery. The wicked also, it must be remembered, carry their depraved nature with them: they are not renovated by their sufferings; so that there is not only a distance from God, but the mind remains still at enmity against him. As there is no likeness to God, so there can be no communion with him; no regard for him; no delight in him. The divine Being has determined that as sin is that which opposes his

* Matt. xxv. 41—46. Psa. ix. 17.

† 2 Thess. i. 7—10.

will, disturbs his government, and produces universal disorder, it shall not pass unpunished. "His wrath," it is said, "is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."* His justice requires this; his holiness demands it. If this were not so, what could Paul mean by these words:—"Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasureth up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."†

What did John mean when he said, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works."‡

The wicked then shall not be annihilated,

* Rom. i. 16.

† Rom. ii. 4, 5. 2 Cor. v. 10.

‡ Rev. xx. 12.

but cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. How dreadful then is this state ! Here are no prospects of deliverance ; no delightful converse ; no alleviation of pain ; no sweets of friendship ; no peace of conscience ; no rays of hope ; no expectation of pardon ;—but all blackness of darkness for ever. Some, however, may be disposed to consider this as an impeachment of the goodness of God, and suppose that his mercy will extend to all. But, however feasible this may appear, it is not warranted by divine revelation. The preceding passages are sufficient to prove the doctrine ; and, however difficult it may be to credit it, we must abide by the decision of holy writ, rather than dispute it. It does not, however, arise from the decree of God as an arbitrary, cruel being, that delights in misery. The cause is sin : and the finally impenitent shall never have to charge the divine Being with injustice, in leaving them to that punishment which their own iniquity has brought upon them. Nor let any reflect on his clemency. If the revelation he has given us assures us of a place of punishment, it at the same time warns us of our danger, provides for our safety, and calls us to pursue the path that leads to hap-

pininess and eternal life. Nor is mercy refused to an individual in the universe, that implores it with a penitent mind. Let not the wicked then charge God foolishly. If they prefer darkness to light, error to truth, sin to holiness; if they tread under foot the Son of God, count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, crucify the Son of God afresh, and do despite to the Spirit of grace; if they love to blaspheme rather than to pray; if they take more pleasure in insulting the divine Being than in pleasing him: if they are determined to indulge themselves in every species of licentiousness, rather than serve and glorify him, then how can they expect to be admitted to a state of happiness hereafter; or, if even they were to enter the celestial world, what delight could they find where the exercises are all spiritual; where the joys are all divine; where the inhabitants are all holy; and where that Being whom they hate is the object of everlasting admiration and praise? No; let not the wicked presume. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and a terrible tempest. This shall be the portion of their cup."*

* Heb. xii. 14. Psalm xi. 6.

Now, then, let me intreat my reader just to stop here for a moment, and ask himself one question—Suppose I should die this day, or this week, what reason have I to believe that I shall escape this punishment? Perhaps you have never seriously laid this to heart; and all you can say is, that you trust God will be merciful, and that you hope to be saved at last. But can you rest satisfied with this, on a business of such infinite importance? Do you know, “that unless a man be converted, and become as a little child, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God?”* Do you know that a mere negative piety will be useless? Do you know that decision is necessary? that neutrality in religion is dangerous? that you are called to follow the Lord fully, and to count all things but loss for him? Will you be content to rest only on a mere expectation of happiness, without having any evidences of your obtaining it? O consider well these awful realities. Flee from the wrath to come. Look up to the Father of mercies for his grace. Think of eternity. Contrast every thing here with what is to come. “To-day hear his voice; harden not your heart, lest he swear in his wrath that you shall not enter into his

* Matt. xviii. 3.

rest.”* Linger not then for a moment. Sleep not on the precipice of danger. Heaven calls. Hell threatens. Death advances. The Saviour speaks: “Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man as his work shall be.† And the Spirit and the bride say come, and let him that is athirst come, and whomsoever will let him take of the water of life freely.”‡

PREPARATION FOR ETERNITY.

LET us now enquire, In what preparation for a better world consists? Do you know then, O reader, “that it is not by works of righteousness which we can do?”§ This may seem a strange expression, but it is the language of scripture, and is worthy of your particular notice. If you ask, “Why not saved by my own works?”—the reason is obvious. By the fall, man lost his original righteousness, and became subject to moral

* Rev. xxii. 12.

† Heb. iii. 11.

‡ Rev. xxii. 17.

§ Titus iii. 5.

inability. His powers are now all so contaminated by sin, and his nature so depraved, that he cannot satisfy the claims of divine justice, expiate his past transgressions, or remove the curse pronounced on him as a sinner. Now, to be saved by our own works, our motives must be absolutely pure and unmixed; our hearts must be divested of all corruption; our obedience must be complete, universal, and perpetual. The law requires perfection. It condemns all deviation in thought, word, or deed. If we offend in one point, we are guilty of all. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."* Can you then say, that you have never offended? Supposing even that you have not been openly vicious, and that your character has been respected among men, can you say you have never felt any evil thoughts; never been led by irregular passions; never uttered an unguarded word, and that, from the first moment since you began to reason, you have never had any thing in view but the glory of God? Alas!—No. "For we have all sinned, and come short of the glory

* Gal. iii. 10.

of God.”* But could you this moment be transformed into an angel and rendered a perfect being, yet that perfection would not atone for past sins. Perfect obedience is a debt due to God, and relates only to the time wherein it is performed, and cannot satisfy for former sins. You stand condemned then by the law. Justice requires satisfaction. You have nothing to pay; and therefore, without a ransom, without a mediator, you must perish. That this is the doctrine of the scriptures, you will clearly see, if you consult the following passages.—“All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. All we, like sheep, have gone astray. Without me ye can do nothing. Knowing, that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid! For if I build

* Rom. iii. 23.

again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor; for I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.”*

The preparation some boast of then, is delusive. It is mere ignorance of the truth, and confidence in a supposed righteousness of their own. Nor are they less deceived who wish to join their imaginary merit to that of the Saviour's; for the fact is, man is utterly unable to recover himself, to atone for his guilt, to change his own heart, and, by his own righteousness, prepare himself for heaven. How is it then that man can be saved? This is the great question we shall attempt now to answer. When the jailor at Philippi made this important enquiry, the reply given him was this, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” This, then, reader, is the only preparation for eternity. It is by faith in him only that we can be justified. “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me. There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be

* Isa. lxiv. 6. Ibid. liii. 6. Johan xv. 5. Gal. ii. 16—19.

saved. He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world: he that believeth on him shall be saved; therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* These scriptures evidently show the way in which we are accepted of God; that salvation is not by works, but by grace; that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers; and that it is through his merit alone they can obtain everlasting life. “There is therefore then,” says the apostle, “no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth—who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”†

* Acts xvi. 17. Acts iv. 12. Rom. x. 4. Rom. iv. 25. John i. 29.

† Rom. viii. 34, 35.

But while we assert that it is through the merits of Jesus Christ alone that we can be saved, let it not be understood, that this is all that is required to make us meet for heaven. Our natures must be changed, the darkness of our understandings must be removed, and the will must be subdued and brought into unison with the will of God. Men are not justified and left in a state of disobedience and enmity against God. Regeneration therefore is stated in the scriptures, as absolutely necessary to the enjoyment of heavenly felicity. We must be "born again; not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."* Let us enquire here into the nature of this important doctrine. *What is it?* It is not *baptism*; for many are baptized, who still remain enemies to God by wicked works.—It is not *education*. This may restrain and reform, in many instances; but we have too many proofs of its inefficacy to change the heart. It is not *conviction*; for many are convinced of sin and not converted from it. It is not *relinquishing open vices*, for this is sometimes done from interest, or

* 1 Pet. i. 23.

for want of opportunity to practise them. It is not *knowledge*; for many know much, like the devil, and yet do not practise what they know. It is not *moral strictness*; for this may take its rise from Pharisaism, as was the case once with Paul.* It is not *talent*; for many will come in that day and say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."† It is not a *profession of religion*; for "some profess that they know God, but in works they deny him."‡ It is not *feeling*, or an emotion of the passions; for some "receive the word with joy, for awhile believe, and, in time of temptation, fall away."§ But regeneration is a real, divine, and saving change of heart. Hence it is said, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."¶ In this great work, the understanding is illu-

* Acts xvi. 5.

† Matt. vii. 21, 22.

‡ Titus i. 16.

§ Luke viii. 13.

¶ 2 Cor. v. 17.

minated, perceives its depravity and danger, and that Christ alone can save from sin and misery. The will is renewed;—not that new faculties are given to the soul, but the will is inclined towards the supreme good. The affections are drawn off from earthly scenes, and placed on divine objects; “beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”*

This is a supernatural work; the effect of the operation of the divine Spirit on the heart. Hence said Jesus to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born of the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”† “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.”‡ By this, however, man is not rendered perfect: he still finds reason to complain of innate corruption, and is daily longing for greater conformity to God. Sin is the great object of his hatred, and he finds himself happy only as he gains the victory over it. For this, divine grace is promised; and he is encouraged to persevere

* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

† John iii. 5.

‡ Jam. i. 18.

under all the opposition he meets with from the world, the flesh, and the devil. “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ. The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger. The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.”*

Now, reader, if you are the subject of this grace, you will evidence it by acknowledging God’s authority over you. You will deeply lament your sinful condition. You will confess your transgressions before him. You will place all your dependence upon the righteousness and grace of his Son Jesus Christ. You will constantly implore the influences of the Holy Spirit. You will be desirous of resigning yourself, under every dispensation, to his will. You will walk in fel-

* Phil. i. 6. Job xvii. 9. Prov. iv. 18. Isa. xl. 31.

lowship with him and live in righteousness, and true holiness before him all your days.

Let me beseech you to try yourself by these criterions. We have already stated how many things may be substituted for this divine change : and mistakes, in this point, are of all others the most awful and dangerous. Can you then ascertain any difference between your present and former state ? Is sin a burden ? Is holiness a delight ? Has the world lost its attractions ? Do you find pleasure in God's house, in his word, in his ways ? Do you love his ministers, his people, his sabbath ?—Can you answer these questions in the affirmative ? If so, happy are you ! You are prepared to live—you are prepared to die. “ You may go your way, eat your bread with joy,”* and participate the blessings of providence with a cheerful heart. You may meet all the revolving scenes of life with a tranquil mind ; and, as you advance towards the heavenly world, you may sing,

“ Fearless of hell and ghastly death,
I'll break through ev'ry foe ;
The wings of love and arms of faith
Shall bear me conqueror through.”

* Eccl. ix. 7.

CONCLUSION.

IN the preceding pages we have briefly considered the vanity and transitory nature of all earthly things, and the importance and necessity of attending to those which relate to our final welfare. Should my reader, after all, feel no concern about his future state, let me intreat him to reflect on his condition. You are seeking after happiness, and constantly pursuing those objects which you think will afford you the greatest satisfaction. "Make me but happy," say you; "that is all I want." "But know, that you cannot be made happy until you are made holy. What happiness can you enjoy, when you are every day adding to your guilt; when you are constantly receding farther from the fountain of felicity; when vile ingratitude and base passions have taken possession of your soul? What peace can you have, if you reflect on a life devoted to nothing but sensual objects? What must you feel, if you look forward to a dying bed; to an eternal world; to that day when you must give an account to Him who will judge "the quick and the dead." Will you say, you are *determined* to be happy; you *will* banish reflection; you *will* make your-

self happy. O, deluded mortal ! This is more than you can do ; it is more than others can do ; it is more than all the world can do. For can you invert the order of things ? Can you create light where there is nothing but darkness ? Can you make that good which the Almighty hath declared is the greatest evil ? Are you stronger than he ? Can you disannul his purpose ? Can you find happiness where he has not placed it ? Do you not know that he holds it in his own hand, and bestows it only on those who fear him ? Are you hardy enough to discredit his word ? Has he not said, “ Evil pursueth sinners ; the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt : there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked ? ” *

What ! in the face of these assertions, will you be bold enough to say, *I will* be happy without God—without religion ? O, consider that this is utterly impossible. You may gratify your senses, acquire wealth, obtain popularity, pursue the pleasures of the world, stifle conscience, and forget death ; but all this is not happiness. It is all transient. It is all too little for an immortal being. It cannot satisfy the soul, prevent death, nor save from the wrath to come.

* Isa. lvii. 20, 21. Prov. xiii. 21.

But behold a source from whence you may draw happiness, abundant in its enjoyment, and eternal in its duration. Behold **One** who can forgive all your sins, purify your nature, expand your mind, and fill you with joy unspeakable and full of glory. “ Seek ye then the **Lord**, while he may be found : call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto the **Lord**, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our **God**, for he will abundantly pardon.”*

Consider, the time is short. Say not, **I** am too much engaged in business ; **I** shall injure my reputation ; **I** am too young, to think of these things. But are you then so busy, so young, so fearful of your reputation, that you can be content to live without any just hope of eternal happiness ? You know not, but before another hour, you may be a corpse, and your spirit summoned to the bar of **God** ; and will you not so much as bend your knee, nor lift up your eyes to him who made you ? What ! are his threatenings nothing to you ? Does he not say, “ If **I** lift up my hand to heaven and say, **I** live for ever ; if **I** whet my glittering sword and my hand take hold on judgment, **I** will

* Isa. lv. 6, 7.

render vengeance on mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me : I will make mine arrows drunk with blood.”*

Are his mercies nothing to you? What! constantly live upon his bounty, every moment breathe his air, and supported by his kindness—and still live in enmity to him? Are his commands nothing to you? Will you respect the authority of an earthly prince, and trample on that of the King of heaven? Will the word of a mortal affect you, and the word of the living God make not the least impression? Is the approbation of a creature that for which you can make many sacrifices; and the favour of God so trifling, that you do not think it worth your while to devote one hour in a year to implore it? Alas! what madness possesses you! what awful insensibility is this! What egregious folly to prefer the pleasures of sin, which are for a season, to the everlasting enjoyment of God in heaven. Behold God himself is represented as being affected with this strange conduct. “O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments; then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. O my people, what have

* Deut. xxxii. 41, 42.

I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.”

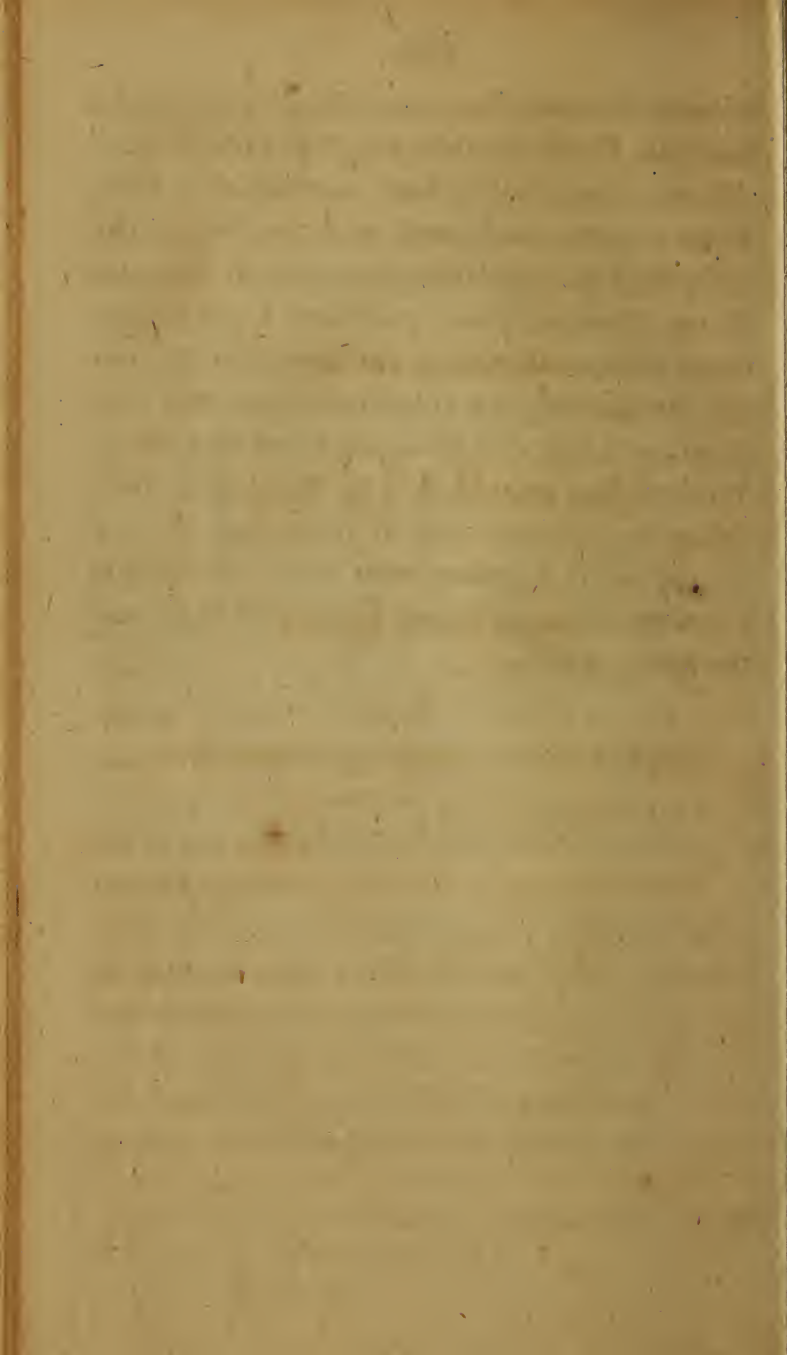
Is the Almighty willing to make you happy? Is he waiting to be gracious? No longer then delay. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things necessary shall be added unto you. Seek him at the throne of grace, for he hears and answers the supplications of those who look to him. Seek him in his word; for therein has he revealed his mind and will. Seek him in his house; for one day in his courts, is better than a thousand. It is better to be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*

Seek him in his ordinances; and you shall not seek in vain, for “blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.† Seek him early. He has the first claim

* Isa. xlviii. 18. Micah vi. 3. Psalm lxxxi. 13, 14. Matt. vi. 33. Psalm lxxxiv. 10.

† Prov. viii. 34, 35.

to your affections, to your time, your talents, your all. Come then and say, "O Lord forgive one who has too long been unmindful of thee. Enter not into judgment with me, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. Blot out all my transgressions; and since I can do nothing without thee, give me grace that my understanding may be enlightened, my will subdued; and my affections placed on thee alone. While I live may I live to thee; and when called to leave this vale of tears, may I have an abundant entrance into thine everlasting kingdom, through Jesus Christ my Lord and Saviour. Amen.



REFLECTIONS
ON
MORTALITY;
OCCASIONED
BY THE DEATH
OF
THE REV. THOMAS SPENCER,
WHO WAS DROWNED
WHILST BATHING AT LIVERPOOL, AUGUST 5, 1811.

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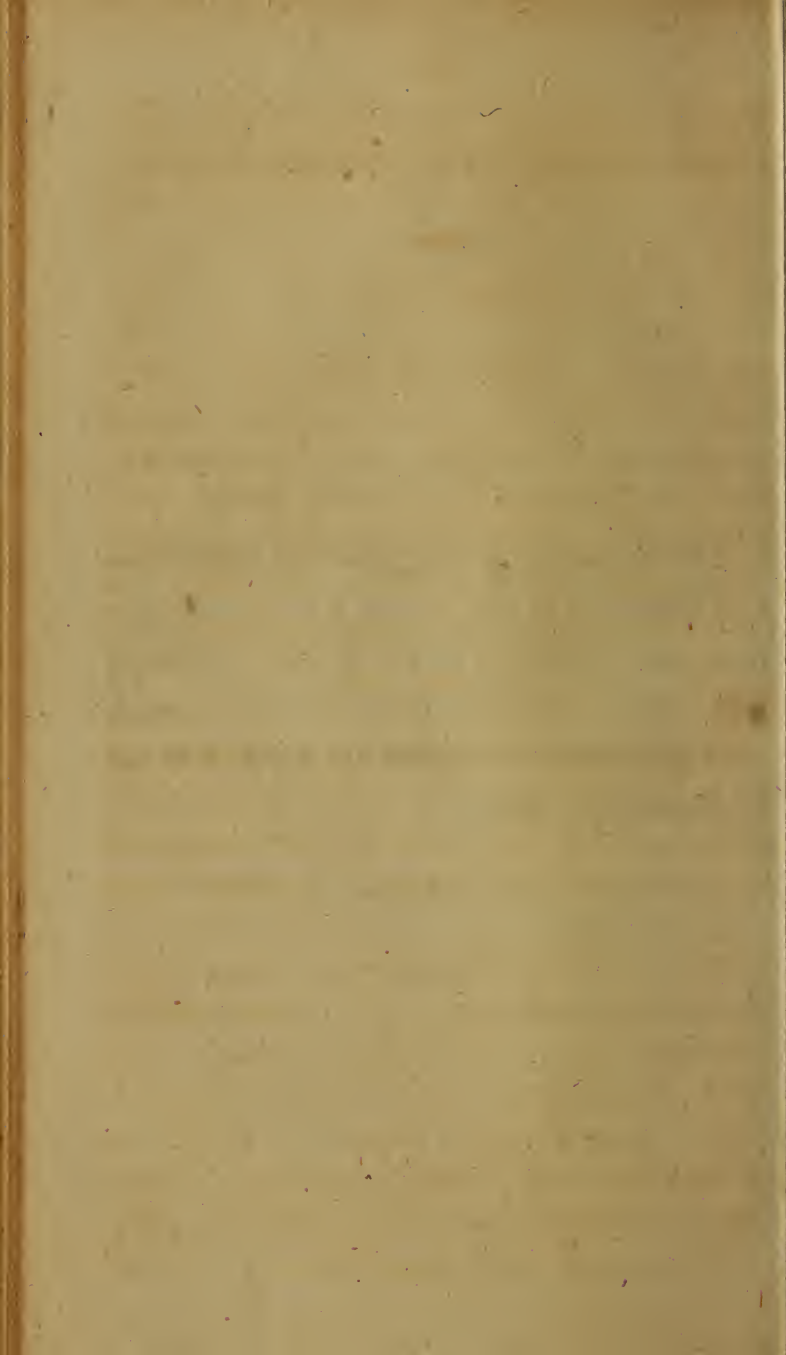
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*The substance of the following **R**eflections was delivered to the Author's own congregation, and by their request is now published. The Author has taken the liberty to make some few additions, which he hopes will not be found unacceptable.*



REFLECTIONS ON MORTALITY.

ISAIAH xi. 6, 7, 8.

The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth; the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people are grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

IT is computed that near thirty millions of the human race die every year! What an awful reflection is this! How great the multitude that are constantly dropping into eternity! and how numerous the paths that lead to the grave! Life, too, is but a short journey, and we soon arrive at the house appointed for all living. We may rather be said to die daily, than to live. We have not only the spoils of death around us, but the seeds of death within us. We do not all, however, descend to the tomb in the same way. Some few are spared to the age of man, and then pass silently away. Others are cut off

in the bloom of life, and in the midst of active and useful exertions. Some linger for a while under painful disease—they see their grave ready before they lie down in it. Others, wearied with life, and impatient under its ills, throw themselves into the arms of death: “they either shake their glass to make it run faster, or break it at once by violence.” And some who bid fair to stand for a season, are unexpectedly called away by some mysterious dispensation of divine providence. Thus it was with our departed young friend. The public eye was upon him, and much was anticipated from his talents and zeal in the great work in which he was engaged; but infinite Wisdom has seen fit to remove him to another world. Well! what shall we say? “Clouds and darkness are round about the Most High; but righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.”*

The words we have chosen are not to be considered only in relation to the opposers of God’s ancient people, at the time of their deliverance from captivity, but are applicable to the whole human race. “The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? *All* flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the

* Psa. xcyii. 1, 2.

flower of the field." The mortality of man then is a subject with which we ought to be deeply affected. It is, indeed, that which makes but a faint impression on the mind ; for, though the living know that they must die, yet there is a most strange insensibility as to this awful event. We can hear of it without concern, and talk of it without feeling ; when it comes nearer to us than usual, we seem awake for a moment, just drop a tear or two over our departed enjoyments, converse a little on the uncertainty of life, and then fall asleep again and dream away our existence ; till at last, we are awakened by this very enemy, whose approach we have all along studied to forget, and which most of us, indeed, are ill-prepared to meet ! But how unwise is this, thus, to impose upon ourselves ! Can any thing be more irrational ? " O that we were but wise—that we did but consider our latter end ! " *

In attending to these words, let us observe the state of man as here represented, and endeavour to derive from them some important and useful lessons.

I. *Observe the Description.*—*Man is flesh !*
It is true he possesses an immaterial, immor-

* Deut. xxxii. 29.

tal principle ; but his animal frame is frail and perishing. He is not composed of gold nor silver, marble nor iron, wood nor stone, nor any of the durable materials around him. almost every object he sees or handles is less perishable than himself. There is nothing substantial in his nature. He is affected by almost every thing that touches him. An insect can contend with him ; a worm can undermine him ; a little air can stifle him ; a few drops of water can drown him ; a moth can crush him. The Almighty need not throw a mountain on him to destroy him ; he need not call for a torrent to inundate him ; he need not open a volcano to swallow him.—No : Weakness and death are in his very frame. It is but an earthly house ; a temporary building ; the various parts of which are kept together with labour and difficulty. The body must be daily fed, or it languishes : it must be clothed, or it is benumbed with cold ; it must lie down for rest, or it will fall of itself : it must be perpetually exercised, or it will become the habitation of disease : it must be treated with attention and watched over with care, or it will be rendered unfit for the functions of life. How many wheels are there in perpetual motion ! the friction of which, if driven too fast, will set fire to the whole machine ; or, if

impeded or clogged, will stop the whole course. The apostle Paul calls it a vile body;* not indeed in respect to God's workmanship—but as it is flesh, formed of the dust of the ground, the habitation of many evil propensities, too often a hindrance to devotion, and must at last become noisome, and be cast into the grave. Here, too, we are all on a level. What is that mighty conqueror, celebrated for his military glory, and applauded for his noble achievements in the field of battle?—It is but flesh. What is that illustrious monarch, sitting on a splendid throne, and clothed in all the robes of majesty?—It is but flesh. What is that profound philosopher, diving into the depths of science, or soaring above the intellects of his fellows.—It is but flesh. What is that persuasive orator, that so impresses with his eloquence, that charms and affects the passions of the human mind?—It is but flesh. What that fine form and beautiful countenance, that attract the attention and fascinate the senses?—It is but flesh. “Death (says one) will alike condemn their eyes to impenetrable night; their tongue to eternal silence; their whole system to the grave. I see a

* Phil. iii. 21.

superb monument: I approach this striking object. I see magnificent inscriptions: I read the pompous titles of general, prince, monarch; but I long to see the inside of this elegant piece of workmanship; and I peep under the stone that covers him, to whom all this pomp is consecrated. There I find—what? A putrid carcase, devoured by worms! O vanity of human grandeur! Vanity of vanities: all is vanity!”* Now, is this the case? Then why should we think so much of our bodies? why should all our happiness be placed in the gratification of our senses? Why should we spend so much time and money in adorning that which must soon decay?—Especially aged people; how painful is it to see them so fond of useless decorations! The day is nearly closed: the evening is advancing; and yet they want to go down to the grave covered with finery. Their strength, perhaps, is gone; their frame has the marks of death upon it. It is but a skeleton; and yet they want to cover it with ornaments. What an affecting sight, to see old age and new fashions meeting together! How much happier they whose adorning is not “the outward adorning of plaiting the hair,

of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel, but is that of the hidden man of the heart, which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”* Seek then this grace. Let not the body be adorned at the expence of the soul. Remember, “to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Put ye on, therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”†

II. *Observe the Comparison.*—“All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field.” Human nature in its lowest state is but grass, and in its highest, but a flower. “The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.”‡ He is then of earthly extraction. Though God was his maker, yet he was not constituted pure intelligence. “The first man, says the Apostle, was of the earth, earthy.”§ Like grass, how easily endangered, how soon cut down. How exposed to the winds and

* 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4.

† Rom. viii. 6. xiii. 14.

‡ Gen. ii. 7.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 47.

storms of adversity. Nor can he screen himself from these. They pass over the field of life, and often prove destructive in their career. The diseases to which we are liable are numerous, and the casualties we are subject to, are not a few. Ten thousand things lie in ambush to push us to the grave. And even events trifling in themselves have proved destructive. "We read of some, that a fly or a grape stone have dispatched them; some that have died by plucking an hair from their breasts; the Almighty thus turning a very hair into a spear to destroy them. If we consider the vicissitude of natural things, we shall find that death reigns in them all. The day dies into night, summer into winter; time itself, that destroys all things, yet dies continually; nor can it exist two minutes together. Our very life is nothing but a succession of dying; every day, and every hour wears away part of it, and so far as it is already spent, so far are we already dead and buried: so that the longest liver has no more, but, that he is longer a dying than others."* But, another figure is here used by the Prophet: "all the goodness thereof, is as the flower of the field." Not as the flower of the garden; where it is cultivated and protected; but of the field,

* Hopkins.

where every hand is ready to gather it, or any foot may tread it down. The flower is noted for three qualities : sweetness, that affects the smell ; beauty, that affects the eye ; softness, that affects the touch. The metaphor, therefore, is here employed to represent man at his best estate. But as the most beautiful flower soon loses these qualities, so it is said, “ the days of man are as grass ; as a flower of the field so he flourisheth ; the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof knoweth it no more. In the morning, it flourisheth and groweth up ; in the evening, it is cut down and withereth.”* Have you not, reader, known this in your own circle ? You have been favoured with earthly comforts ; you have often looked upon them with peculiar pleasure ; you have taken more than usual care with those flowers which have appeared tender and beautiful in your own eyes ; you have transplanted them, as you thought to a more genial soil ; you have said, well, these are delightful objects—these are sources of the greatest pleasure—truly, I am happy in their possession—these shall be my support and comfort in times yet to come. O, how have you gone and watered these flow-

* Psa. ciii. 14, 16. xc. 6.

ers ; how have you hedged them round ; how have you endeavoured to protect them when you saw the storm advancing ; but ah ! after all, you could not preserve them : you have had the pain to see the leaf fade, the beauty decline, the energy fail, and presently the whole fall. What ! said you, *Can it be ?* Is this my child ; is this my friend ; is this the object I so much admired ? Father of mercies ! why this ? why didst thou not smite yonder weed ? why didst thou not let thy hand fall on the unsightly plant, rather than on this choice flower ? Thus, however, Providence is pleased to work ; and herein it becomes us to learn the vanity of depending on any human excellency. Neither the goodliness of the flower, the care of its owner, nor the felicity of its situation, can preserve it alive. Beware, then, of idolizing the creature. Turn your attention to a superior object : anticipate the joys of another world—there, no worm is at the root ; there, the goodlinesss shall never fade.

III. *Mark the Universality of Man's Mortality.* Not a few, but *all* flesh is grass. “ As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; so death passed upon all men,

for that all have sinned. It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment. There is no man that hath power over the Spirit to retain the Spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death.”* Ever since the entrance of sin, death has been making the most awful ravages. “One generation passeth away, and another cometh; but the earth abideth for ever.”† “The world,” says one, “is like a great fair, where some are coming in—others going out; while the assembly that is in it is confused, and the most part know not wherefore they are come together.”‡ Whether men however be wise or ignorant, idle or active, rich or poor, young or old, death is common to all. It is not to be bribed by riches, impeded by power, conquered by strength, nor stayed by entreaties. All ranks fall before this destroyer. Sometimes it is the harmless infant, who has no sooner entered the vale of tears than it is commanded to depart. Sometimes the youth, whose powers just began to open, and whose appearance was the most promising, is unexpectedly removed. Sometimes the middle aged, in the midst of business, and appa-

* Rom. v. 12. Heb. ix. 27.

† Eccl. i. 4. viii. 8.

‡ Boston.

rently in health, are pierced by a sudden arrow from the bow of death. Nor are the rich and the great exempt. They too must die, like others. There is no royal path to the grave. There is not one kind of death for the monarch, and another for the peasant. The crown cannot prolong life, nor the sceptre sway the last enemy, death. Here, too, the wise philosopher, as well as the ignorant barbarian, must fall. The finest understanding must be darkened; the strongest powers fail; and the most brilliant imagination be clouded.—Nor shall the mighty conquerors of nations escape. Where are our Alexanders, and our Cesars, who have struck terror through the whole world? And, whither are those tending, who yet disturb mankind with the noise of the chariots of war, the clash of arms, and the groans of the dying? Soon they must surrender to the king of terrors, and be numbered among the slain. Neither let the beautiful nor the fair pride themselves in external appearance. They too must lie down in the grave, and their glory fade. The righteous also, however desirable their example, however exalted their piety, must go the way of all the earth. The wicked, too must depart. However unwilling, they

must obey ; however unprepared, they must go. Their cries to stay cannot be heard ; their hopes of respite will be in vain. The finally impenitent, it is said, do not go down gently into the grave ; but they “ are driven away in their wickedness : they are driven out of light into darkness, and chased out of the world.”* But shall not the benevolent, the zealous, the useful be spared ? An Enoch and an Elijah, indeed, reached the land of pure delight without passing the dark valley of death ; but no promise is given to others of the like privilege. Yes ; the most useful must die. These we may consider as the goodliest flowers in the field : as the most valuable of all. But how often are they cut down just as they begin to bud, or suddenly wither as they arrive to their full bloom ? What shall we say to the instance before us ? Was not here a beautiful flower, with hues painted by the rays of the Sun of Righteousness ; and, unfolding its excellencies as the summer advanced, but alas ! suddenly swept away, to be seen no more. O God ! mysterious is thy providence, but righteous art thou in all thy ways !

* Job xviii. 18. Prov. xiv. 32.

Here, then, is the end of all. “The grass *withereth*, and the flower *fadeth*,” but it is added, “because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it.” Let us not consider it then as coming by chance. Whatever be the means, the place, or the time, let us remember, it is the Lord’s doing. Besides, it is necessary to die, as well as to live. There is another state of things, as well as the present, and of far more importance. There is a judgment to come; and we must leave this world to appear before that solemn tribunal. There are dark providences which cannot be understood here: we must quit the present scene, that we may be able to bear the explanation. There are riches of glory, which our present capacities cannot contain: we must die before we shall be able to explore them. There are abodes of light, and mansions of absolute purity above; but we must be dissolved, leave our imperfections here, and be endowed with glorious bodies and celestial minds, to be fitted for the enjoyment of them. To the righteous then, death is a friend. If the flower drop, it is that it may be removed from the desert, to bloom for ever in the light and glory of the paradise of God.

As it respects human life, the repetition used in the text should teach us the earnestness with which the frailty of man should be stated, and the necessity there is of endeavouring to impress the subject on our own hearts. It is not said that the grass *will* fade, but that it *now* does. We shall not only go, but we are all *now* going to one place. "Our life is a candle, either blown out by the wind, or soon burns out of itself." Death comes indeed very sudden to some. Some go cheerfully to rest in the evening, but are consumed before the morning light. Some venture into the river, without suspecting danger; but the waves cover them, and they are seen no more. Others set out on a journey, for business or pleasure, but are thrown out of the vehicle, and carried back dead. Others, while conversing with a friend, in a moment are seized with pain, heave a sigh, and fall lifeless to the ground. "It is a strange folly then, that we, who are subject to such casualties, should yet dream of dying no other way than by old age. Did we but seriously consider, by what small pins the frame of man is held together, it would appear no less a mi-

racle to us, that we live to the end of one day, or one hour.”*

But, supposing we are preserved from these painful circumstances, still let us remember, that we are dying while we live. Every step *in* life is a step towards the *end* of it. Youth, health, vigour, prosperity may intercept our view of death, but it does not place us farther from it. Life is said to have wings. “My days,” said Job, “fly away, as an eagle that hasteth to the prey.”† It is not by slow and deliberate paces that we are going; it is not with an ordinary flight; but like the extraordinary swiftness of the eagle after her prey. How wonderful that it should so little affect us; especially too, when we see so many continually falling around us! “Who is there that sees the mark of the archer, and beholds one arrow fly over his head, another light at his feet; one glance over his right, another by his left hand, that will not at length think of his danger—that, by the very next, he also may be slain? Man is the mark at which death is continually shooting. Sometimes the arrow flies over

* Hopkins.

† Job ix. 25, 26.

our heads, and slays some great person, our superior. Sometimes it lights at our feet, when it kills a child, or servant, or those who are our inferiors. Sometimes it passes by our left hand, and kills an enemy, at whose death possibly we rejoice; and, anon, it strikes the friend of our right hand. Though we see all this; though we see our friends and foes, of all states and ages, drop down dead around us; yet are we as careless as if it did not concern us; whereas possibly, the very next arrow may strike us through the heart dead upon the place!"*

But while the best and most serious must confess their insensibility to danger, how should we pity the wicked! Sudden death to a good man is sudden glory; but the wicked are neither happy in the thought of death, nor at all prepared for it. They have their portion in this life. The beauties of virtue, the excellencies of godliness, the glories of heaven have no charms for them. They prefer the indulgence of their appetites, the pleasures of the world, and the gratification of their passions to all the satisfaction which a good hope, a pure conscience, or right prin-

* Hopkins.

ciples can afford. How dreadful must the prospect of death be to such men! The very thought of leaving this world must fill them with horror. Hence, when one flattered another in the midst of his enjoyments, and asked him, What he wanted more? he said, "*Continuance.*" But this is the very thing that cannot be granted. To how many does God say, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee?" O miserable man, then, who builds his happiness on what he cannot retain; who thinks about every thing but the right object; who is always busy in gazing upon the baubles of sense, and despises the pearl of great price; who is assiduously gathering imaginary treasures, which at last will be of no more avail than pebbles or straws, while he neglects the one thing needful! May such remember, before it be too late, that without repentance of their sin and faith in the Saviour, they cannot meet death with joy, nor ever be permitted to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Having now offered a few Reflections on Mortality let us observe,

IV. The consolation afforded us under these affecting vicissitudes.

“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” And Peter adds, “and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.”* Let us not say then, that our condition is deplorable. He who is infinitely wise and holy, is also merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. “As a father pitieth his children, so he pitieth us.”† He has written to us the great things of his law; he has favoured us with the revelation of his will. Beholding us as rational, yet sinful and dying creatures, he hath made known to us a system every way adapted to renovate our natures, illuminate our minds, relieve our miseries, and conduct us safe to a happier world. “In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”‡ Here, then, amidst all the changes of time, and the awful ravages of death, we find a firm basis on

* 1 Pet. i. 25.

† Psalm ciii. 15.

‡ 1 John iv. 9, 10.

which to build. Here we can behold God as our father, Christ as our mediator, and the divine Spirit as our comforter and guide. Here it is that we hear a voice, saying, "Son, daughter, be of good cheer, all thy sins are forgiven thee." Our attention is turned off from every thing here to centre alone in the chief good. Here we can approach the Almighty without trembling; and, without presumption, humbly hope for his benediction. Under the cross, we can dwell without fear, and with wonder and delight behold our guilt rolled away for ever. Clothed with the righteousness of our Redeemer, and participating the influences of his grace, we can rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. Yes, this, and this only is the support of man, under all the evils of life. This affords tranquillity within, while the tempest rages without. Welcome, then, all ye scenes of sorrow and trouble! Welcome, all ye vicissitudes of life, and harbingers of death! Yea, welcome death itself, and an eternal world! These shall not affright the renewed soul; these shall not damp the happiness of him who looks above, and aspires to glory and immortality. O how delightful,

how suitable is the gospel of Christ! What affliction does not this sweeten; what loss does not this repair; what condition does not this make easy! What gloom does not this dispel! "Blessed are they that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance; in thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted."*

But let us observe here the striking contrast between this delightful system and all other things. The one is said to *fade*, but the other shall *stand for ever*. We have already seen that every thing of a sublunary nature tends to decay: however excellent it may appear to our view; however valuable it may be considered in itself; or however desirable we may be of retaining it—it is of no consequence; mutability and dissolution are written upon all. But here is the Plant of Renown, that bears twelve manner of fruits; and which shall never cease to yield in the paradise above. For ages already hath the Gospel shed its influence among the sons of men. The powers of darkness, indeed, have done all they could to destroy the

* Psalm lxxxix. 15, 16.

leaves which are for the healing of the nations. The tree of life has been surrounded with enemies. There, the savage barbarian, the refined philosopher, the malignant demon, the proud pharisee, the boasting infidel, and the wretched profligate, have all assembled for the purpose of its destruction. But how vain! Who can extinguish the sun? who can blot out a world? who can cause the heavens to depart as a scroll? who can grasp the ocean in his hand? As well might feeble mortals attempt to do this, as endeavour to injure that which is more dear to God, than all the material systems ever created by his all-powerful hand. "It endureth for ever." Yes; it shall still continue to make progress. What! though enemies oppose, ignorance and infidelity strive, and the powers of the world unite against it. What! though the means may seem sometimes to be useless, and the faithful, promising servants of God be removed—yet it must prevail. All the laws of nature must be reverted; the sun, turned into darkness; the moon, into blood; and the stars drop from their spheres, sooner than the purposes of Jehovah shall be disannulled. The gospel must live, and finally

triumph. All mankind of every age and nation, shall be raised, and assembled to attend the funeral of the world; but none shall ever be called to witness the extirpation of the gospel. It is, therefore, justly designated *everlasting*; for it shall endure to the end of time, become victorious over all nations, and its happy effects felt for ever in a better world.

You, Christian, must shortly feel the stroke of mortality. Heart and flesh must fail; but in that solemn moment you will find, more than ever, the suitability of this divine scheme. When not a single creature in the world can be of any service to you, this shall not leave you comfortless, but remain your support to the last. Then, when closing your eyes on all earthly scenes; when leaving your dearest relatives and friends; when the cold hand of the last enemy is upon you, you shall sing, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

V. Lastly. Observe, that both Man's Morality and the Divine Clemency are to be proclaimed; for the voice said, Cry.

The ministers of the sanctuary are not to dwell in solitude ; they are not to live perpetually in the study, nor spend their time in silent meditation. They must come forth ; they must cry aloud, and spare not ; they must lift up their voice, to warn men of their danger, and to point them to the place of refuge. " I have set watchmen on thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace, day nor night : ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silent."* Such is the divine command. Nor let it be considered as a small privilege, to be reminded of our real condition, and to be favoured with the tidings of mercy. " But how shall men call on him in whom they have not believed ? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard ? and how shall they hear without a preacher ? And how shall they preach, except they be sent ? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things !"†

The ministration of the gospel is therefore of the greatest importance. It is for this purpose the Almighty is pleased to raise up and qualify his servants, that they may be faithful

* Isa. lxii. 6.

† Rom. x. 14, 15.

monitors to the sons of men. Earnestly, zealously, constantly must they declare the truth. They must be "instant in season ; out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine."*

Various may be the talents of the ambassadors of Christ, but their great object must be the same. When this is kept in view, we may expect the Divine blessing will render them successful ; for he has said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."† Let us here recollect, however, that though the Almighty is pleased to honour men and not angels as the instruments of preaching the gospel, yet they are but earthen vessels : they are flesh, and cannot abide for ever. Sometimes they are taken away at the very time when they appear to be the most promising and the most useful. Thus has divine Providence been pleased to remove our dear young friend, of whom we shall now proceed to give some account.

Mr. Thomas Spencer was born at Hertford, and received his religious impressions very early in life. Having a great desire to engage in the work of the ministry, he was placed under the care of the Rev. W. Hordle of Har-

* 2 Tim. iv. 2.

† Matt. xxviii. 20.

wich. Here he stayed for twelve months, and displayed evident marks of considerable talent and piety. Before the age of sixteen, he was admitted into Hoxton Academy.* Here, on account of his youth, it was thought proper that he should appear in public as little as possible at first. Supplies however being wanted,

* The writer of this being on the committee when he was admitted, well remembers the impression his exhibition made on the gentlemen present. All seemed filled with surprise, that, at so early an age, he should possess such clear views of truth, should be so well acquainted with christian experience, and should be capable of delivering himself in so masterly a manner. It brought to mind (as was then stated) the early genius of a Henry, a Watts, a Doddridge, and an Edwards—characters ever to be remembered with pleasure by the church of God. The following is a copy of his religious experience, which was read to the committee previous to his admission:

Harwich, Nov. 10, 1806.

“It was my happiness to be born of parents, who maintain a regard for real piety and the fear of God; by them I was from my infancy, taught to read the Scriptures, together with other books of a serious nature. I think I may safely say, that from my childhood I felt some more than common impressions on my mind, with respect to the existence and perfections of God, the evil and awful consequences of sin, and the advantages of being religious; but, alas! these impressions, though

Mr. S. was sent occasionally to preach. His popularity soon began to appear, and the requests for Mr. Spencer's labours were so numerous, that it was with difficulty that they could be granted. The sweetness of his tone, the evangelical strain of his discourse, his accurate and appropriate quotations from scripture,

so frequently felt, had not that abiding influence which they have had on the minds of others, but were like 'the morning cloud and the early dew which passeth away. As I grew rather older, I began to perceive some excellencies in religion, and to envy the happiness which I believed serious people enjoyed. I knew something of the form of religion and the doctrines of it, from having been taught catechisms, and lessons calculated to give youthful minds some ideas of the worship and conduct which God requires. Yet notwithstanding this, I gave too much (far too much) attention to the reading of novels and romances, the unhappy effect of which I lament to the present day. Many of these books I procured of lads, without the knowledge of my father. I felt a degree of pleasure in hearing lively, animated sermons; but I have reason to believe that this sprung from a desire to please my friends, and give myself an opportunity of imitating the preacher's voice and gesture. I also composed little pieces of poetry on sacred subjects, which I have since destroyed, because I then knew nothing of experimental, vital godliness, and of course was only mocking God in them; but I did not give up making verses. All this while, I was totally ignorant of that divine principle of grace in the heart,

his peculiar energy, his youthful appearance, his admirable gift of prayer, all tended to render him popular. Having completed his studies at Hoxton, many destitute congregations

without which, I am sensible, nothing we can do is acceptable to God. I knew nothing of the Holy Spirit's work, in convincing me of sin, and leading me to Jesus Christ as my Saviour; I knew nothing of communion with God and with his Son. I hope some of the sermons of Mr. Ebenezer White of Hertford, were not altogether useless to me, as well as some which I heard at Lady Huntington's chapel there; but from my conduct at that time, in various particulars, I cannot say that I had experienced what was meant by being born again. If you ask me from what time I date my conversion to God, I must say, that the exact time I cannot tell, but I think I may also say, that the Lord drew me gradually to himself, and by degrees I loved devotional exercises more and more; and I hope that I have within these four years, experienced many refreshing seasons. How I wish to have my evidences brightened, as it respects personal interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. I desire to cast my all upon him, and wait his will concerning me. However short my experience in the divine life has been, can I not appeal to God, and say, 'Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.'

* * * * *

"I hope that my reasons for wishing to be a labourer in the Lord's vineyard are sincere, and that they do not

were looking with wishful eye towards him, nor was there a little exertion among them who should succeed in obtaining him. As his talents however were acceptable, it was thought that

spring from any improper motives. If I should be called into it, I pray that I may be kept faithful, and never shun to declare the whole counsel of God. As I know something of the excellency of the ways of wisdom, I am anxious that my fellow mortals may be partakers of the same grace, and that they may be brought to know God, and experience the riches of divine love and mercy in Christ Jesus: and if God should so honour me, as to make me an instrument in his hand, of doing them real good, how happy should I be; how willing to endure hardships for Jesus' sake. As I trust God has given me a desire to act for his glory, and I know that he is glorified in the salvation of sinners, I am willing, if he should call me to the work, I am willing, I say, to engage in it. I am aware, that it is an arduous and a difficult work, yet from these principles, I would fain be a faithful minister of Jesus Christ. I would follow the leadings of divine providence. By the good hand of my God upon me, I am brought hitherto; and although some circumstances are against me, yet, 'where he appoints, I'll go and dwell.' I am not quite sixteen years old, yet young as I am, I have committed many sins, and experienced many mercies. Now, unto him that is able to keep me from falling, and to present me before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, for ever and ever. *Amen.*"

a large sphere of usefulness would be desirable. Accordingly, he accepted a call to Liverpool, and commenced his stated ministry on the first Sabbath in February last.* Here attracting vast multitudes of people, a larger place was thought necessary. On the 17th of April he laid the foundation-stone of a new chapel, to be ninety-six feet in length, and sixty-six feet in breadth. On this occasion he wrote to a friend in London as follows: "Yesterday I laid the foundation-stone of my new chapel; gave an address on the spot; and dedicated the place to God in solemn prayer. The auditory consisted of not less than five thousand people, who were all fixed in their attention. May I on that ground often find a solace for my care in the public worship of God! May he bless the undertaking! May his eyes and his heart be there perpetually!"

* Before he left the Academy he delivered a parting address, in the presence of his fellow students, founded on these remarkable words, of the apostle Paul, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

Acts xx. 24.

In a letter to Mr. Wilson, dated June 4, he thus expresses himself :

“ The walls of Zion are to be built in troublesome times, for such they are to me ; yet I would submissively commit my case to God ; he may ordain, that the benefit of his church, and the good of others, shall be promoted by the ills I endure. You know poor White of Chester has received the end of his faith, the salvation of his soul. I delivered the funeral oration over his grave. We are all dying creatures, hastening to the world of immortality. I think that, lately, the world has appeared to me in its true light : it passeth away. May we by every dispensation of Providence be rendered more meet for the inheritance of the saints ! May we be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven ! ”

On the 27th of June he was ordained. Mr. Hordle, who gave the charge, made the following remarkable observations : you, my dear young brother, must die, and stand at the bar of God. Your ordination service may be a prelude to your funeral service ; for what is man ? Man is but of yesterday ; and his days are as a shadow. How often have we seen the sun go down while it is yet day ! While

the church has been pleasing itself with the prospect of enjoying the pious, fervent labours of an endeared minister for years, has an unexpected stroke separated them for ever! Mourning survivors, wondering, have said, "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour!"

And truly how mysterious are the ways of Providence. His time on earth was indeed to be short. On the sabbath preceding his death he preached in the morning from those words, Jeremiah xxxi. 3: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." He afterwards administered the Lord's Supper, in a manner remarkably edifying and impressive. In the evening, he took for his text the words of our Lord, as recorded in Luke x. 42. "But one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

On Monday morning, "It appears that Mr. Spencer left his residence in the Park, in good health, about eleven o'clock in the forenoon (August 5) and walked down to the beach, where he met with a gentleman of the name of Brookfield, who had been bathing, and was then dressing, with whom he entered into con-

versation, and asked if the place was a good one for bathing. On being answered in the affirmative, Mr. S. began to undress. When he walked into the water he was met by a person of the name of Potter, one of the workmen of the Herculaneum pottery, who directed him in what manner he should come into the water, but had no knowledge of him. Mr. Spencer observed it was very cold; when Potter said, he would feel warmer when he had been in awhile. When Mr. Spencer was about breast-high, he plunged over head, and then made an attempt to swim in a parallel line with the shore; and after he had gone about two yards in this direction, he recovered his feet, and again said, "Oh! it is very cold!" Soon after this, by the strength of an eddy current, produced by a projecting rock, he was swept out of his depth. Potter himself, who is an expert swimmer, found himself floating in the same direction, and with some difficulty recovered the shore, when he looked about for Mr. Spencer, and saw the top of his head floating above the surface of the water. Potter knew not whether he was amusing himself, or drowning. He however, cried out to him, but receiving no answer, immediately plunged in again, and swam to the rock to render him assistance, which he found

impossible, Mr. Spencer having then sunk in seven feet water; and Potter with some trouble got up the side of the rock, and communicated the intelligence to Mr. Smith, the resident-agent of the potteries, who immediately ordered out two boats, which were directly manned and brought to the spot, where every exertion was used by Potter, as well as by those in the boats, to find the body. At length, they succeeded in drawing it up, after it had been in the water about fifty minutes. It was instantly conveyed to the shore, where, by the judicious arrangements of Mr. Smith, there were several physicians and surgeons in attendance, who used every possible method that could be devised to restore animation, but without effect.”*

Such was the melancholy end of this excellent young minister, at the age of twenty years and a half. Lovely youth! little didst thou think, the day before, when expatiating on the glories of heaven, that thou shouldst so soon be there! Little didst thou think, that thine immortal spirit should take its flight from the briny deep to the celestial world! Little didst thou think, that, in a few days, the dear object of thy affections should have to weep, in the

* Liverpool Paper.

anguish of her soul, in hearing the melancholy tidings of thy death! Ah! and little did we imagine, that on thy tomb this inscription should be written—"Here are the remains of one who bid fair to be eminent and useful in the church, but who was suddenly swallowed up by the mighty waves!" Well, "it is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good. He gave, and he hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord."*

* "On Tuesday, August the 13th, amidst an immense concourse of people, the remains of Mr. Spencer were conveyed from the park to Newington chapel for interment. The scene was solemn and impressive, and the numbers which came to pay this last sad tribute of respect to his memory, showed how deep an interest the public had felt in his character and melancholy death. In the order of procession, first walked the gentlemen of the faculty, and immediately before the corpse a number of dissenting ministers, four abreast. Then came the body, carried on a bier, the pall supported by ten ministers, five on each side. The mourners followed, and the procession was closed by the friends of the deceased, to the number of one hundred and fifty, in white hatbands and gloves, six abreast. All the streets through which the procession passed were crowded to excess; so were also the windows and balconies of the houses. The greatest decorum was however observed, and a seriousness, according with the occasion, was manifested by all. The body was taken into the chapel,

Learn here the sovereignty of God. Here was a young man highly esteemed. "Of manners most amiable, conciliating, and engaging. As a preacher, his talents were held in a degree of estimation, and possessed an extent of influence, which have seldom been equalled in the annals of pulpit-eloquence. Perhaps it scarcely ever before fell to the lot of any individual, at so early an age, to have diffused religious impression through so extensive a circle of hearers." He was just about to enter into the connubial state with an amiable young

where Mr. Charrier, minister of Bethesda chapel, read part of the 15th chapter of the 1st epistle to the Corinthians, and the 4th and 5th chapters of the 1st of Thessalonians, and afterwards prayed extempore. At the grave an eloquent and impressive oration was delivered by Mr. Fletcher of Blackburn, and the service was concluded by a prayer from Mr. Lister, of Lime-street chapel."

This melancholy event was improved by the Rev. William Roby, at Liverpool, and by the Rev. Henry Forster Burder, at Hoxton chapel. This place of worship, though spacious could not contain the multitudes that came together. The writer of this, therefore, at the request of several present, addressed a large congregation in the adjoining garden. Several other sermons were delivered to crowded auditories in various places.

lady of pious and respectable connections. The church was looking forward with delightful prospects of his success ; and thousands were ready to say, “ This is the man whom God delighteth to honour. But, ah ! God’s thoughts are not as our thoughts ; nor his ways, as our ways. Behold, he taketh away ; who can hinder him ? who will say unto him, What doest thou ? ”

2. Learn God’s power and independency. He can carry on his cause without us. Paul is no more ; Wickliffe is no more ; Luther is no more ;—but his gospel survives ! His cause flourishes ! The patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, the reformers—where are they ? they have finished their work, and are gone to rest. But the truth died not with them ; the glory is not departed. Other instruments have succeeded. The ark is not lost ; the word of the Lord has free course, and will finally triumph over all. Let us not, then, despair. He who raised up our young friend, and made him useful for a season,* can easily supply his

* Mr. Roby observes, that his ministry was attended with happiest effects on the hearts and in the conduct of numerous individuals. Many have given pleasing evidences of being seals to his ministry. At the very period of his death, he was intentionally girding himself

place. Besides, he is taken away from the evil to come. Popularity might have become a snare, or some evil might have befallen him. Let us be satisfied that he has done his work,

for renewed exertions. He had prepared his pen and folded his paper for the purpose of composing a sermon, which he had engaged to preach for the benefit of the London Religious Tract Society ; and went to bathe in the river, expressly for the purpose of fitting himself the better for his service, having previously found that bathing answered the end of invigorating his mind for study.

On the preceding day, which happened to be the communion-sabbath, he was peculiarly animated and affecting. In conversation, and in family-devotion that evening, he was remarkably spiritual, and mentioned the extraordinary degree of vigour which he had that day enjoyed in his public services. A friend having hinted that he seemed to be very happy whilst engaged in prayer at the Lord's supper ; he replied, " O, yes ! I thought I could have prayed, and prayed, and mounted up to heaven !" On the following morning, the last that he was to behold here below, he thus addressed a young female friend, who had just been admitted into the church.—" Have much communion with your own heart ; be much in private devotion ; walk closely with God !" He then proceeded to the river, and was heard singing an hymn while putting off his clothes. Such was the holy disposition of his soul when death was insensibly approaching !

*See Mr. Roby's Funeral Discourse for
Mr. Spencer.*

though at an early period. Infinite Wisdom saw fit to transplant this flower to a happier soil; and, who can tell? his very death may prove the conversion of many! We must submit. He doth all things well.

3. Learn the uncertainty of every thing here. Ah! little did his mother think, when he hung upon her breast, or when she dandled him on her knee, that this would be his melancholy end. And how little do we know of futurity? Let us not then “boast of to-morrow, for we cannot tell what a day may bring forth.”* Let us ask, if death should suddenly meet *us*, are we ready to die? Do we know that it is dangerous to procrastinate? Do we consider “that there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge in the grave, whither we are going.”†

O let us seek the favour of him, then, who alone can forgive our sins, and whose Spirit can prepare us for the world above: then, should our departure be sudden, it will all be well; we shall have an abundance entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let us anticipate a better world; let us rejoice in the hope of glory. Yes, Spen-

* Eccl. ix. 10.

† Prov. xxvii. 1.

cer! we hope to see thee again, and thy spiritual children too, whom God hath graciously given thee. There we hope to join thee in celebrating the praises of the Most High; there, beyond the reach of danger, we shall mingle our joys for ever; there we shall go no more out; there, the waves of trouble shall never beat upon us again, for there, it is said, "shall be no more sea."*

* Rev. xxi. 1.

THE END.



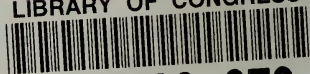








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